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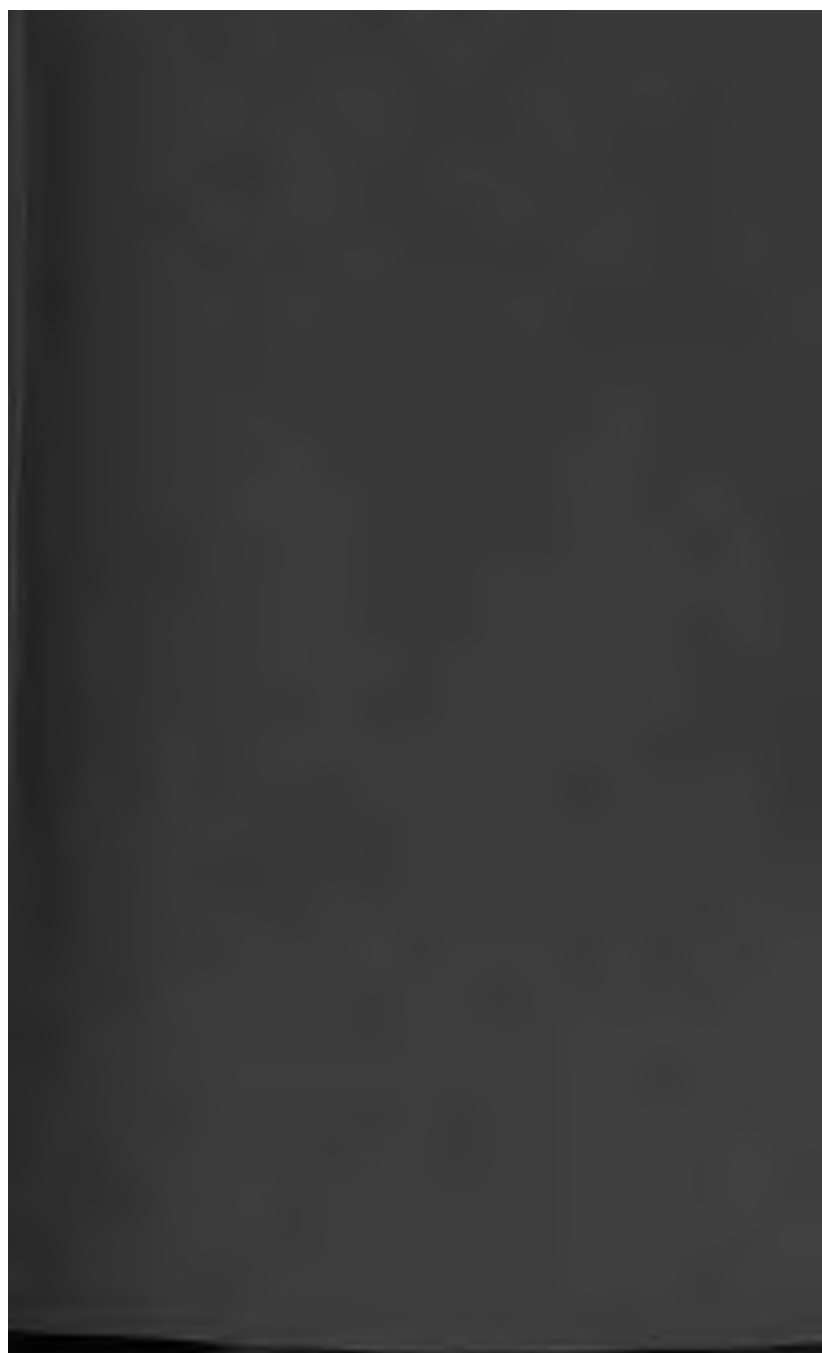
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MILDRED.

VOL. I.

MILDRED.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

“LESLIE TYRRELL,” “FAITH UNWIN’S ORDEAL,”

&c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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PART I.

VOL. I.

B



CHAPTER I.

CAN you recall the kind of unreal feeling that comes over you when at last you gain a thing that you have thought of, and wished for very long? Perhaps it is something that you have desired to possess, and when you get it it seems impossible to believe that it is yours; or something you have longed for years to see, and when you look on it at last it is as if you were looking at a picture, and the real bodily flesh and blood *you*—standing, perhaps, in the room where you have wished to be, or amongst the faces of which you have thought so often—seems as if it was not you at all, but a shadow in a dream. So

it was with Mildred Treherne, when she was nineteen, and went, for the first time, outside the narrow place that she had hitherto called "home."

She had longed throughout her life to see beyond it. That home of hers was dull, monotonous, prosaic. It was a great country house, more than twenty miles away from even any large provincial town, and she had lived in it, summer and winter, with hardly any variation, all her life. She had one brother, who was four years younger than herself, and at whose birth her mother had died; and a father, whose quiet and indolent habits, and tendency to invalidism, made him seldom move, or care to move, from home. Once or twice Mr. Treherne had taken his daughter up to London, but these visits had been short and rare, and had shown Mildred only so much

of London life as served to whet the appetite and kindle the longing of the ambitious, clever, eager-hearted girl. Her quiet country life used to be unutterably wearisome to her after these glimpses into the more stirring world beyond. While Mr. Treherne would sink back again, on their return home, into his easy-chair, with a sigh of satisfaction and relief, as over a tedious duty well accomplished, his eager daughter would roam from room to room of the silent, large, dull house, fretting out her heart with useless regrets and longings.

What had she to do here, or to care for? Her father loved her, but he made no companion of her; he was a reserved, silent man, who cared little for companions; her brother was at school; she had not even a governess who might have been a friend to her. She was her own mistress, and she did not know

what to do with her liberty ; she was her own instructress, and she did not know what to set herself to learn. Another kind of girl might have found interests enough around her to keep her from stagnation. She might have visited the poor people near her, she might have taught the village children, she might have made flannel petticoats, or knitted stockings, or tended her flowers, or practised her scales. But Mildred cared for none of these things. I do not know that it was her fault : some people are born with a vocation for one thing, some for another, and Mildred's vocation was for a life amongst grown men and women, with large brains, and quick blood in their hearts—not for one amongst children and sick people, or even amongst trees and flowers. She could not help it ; the trees and the flowers were very lovely to her, but she could not make them fill her

heart: with a passionate love for everything that was beautiful, still she wanted something more than inanimate beauty to satisfy her: full of intellect and ambition, she wanted to mix with the world, and to learn, and taste, and know.

She was just nineteen when at length her longing promised to be gratified. Mr. Treherne was something of a hypochondriac, and had for some time been feeling, or fancying, that he was ill—had been nursing a summer cough, and taking gruel when he went to bed.

“I am a little uneasy about this coming winter,” he said to his medical man, when the summer was passing away. “I don’t feel my chest what it ought to be, you know; the slightest touch of cold knocks me up.”

“Why don’t you go to a warmer climate,

then?" his doctor answered. "Go to Italy for the winter—you couldn't do a better thing."

"Ah! I hadn't thought of that," Mr. Treherne said.

And then he pondered the matter for a few days. The plan was not without attractions to him; for, though delicate and indolent, he had always been a sort of dilettante student, and cared enough for books and the things that books had taught him to take an interest, of a sort, in lands beyond his own; but yet he liked best to take an interest in them sitting safely by his own fireside.

"I don't think I'll go," he said presently to himself. "It would be a terrible upsetting of everything."

And he half resolved to think no more of it.

But then a chill, damp day or two came, and he lay awake in bed and coughed.


"I don't believe I got an hour's sleep last night," he said pathetically, one morning, to his daughter. "All night long I had that constant irritation in the throat. Barker has been advising me to spend a winter in Italy. I really don't know what to think about it."

They were sitting at breakfast together. As he spoke the girl's eyes lighted up—the colour sprang to her face.

"Oh! father, let us go!" she said.

She sat breathlessly looking at him, with her heart upon her lips.

"My dear, you are so vehement," he replied half petulantly. "If the thing is to be thought about at all, it must be considered deliberately. You just say, 'Let us go,' as if we had nothing to do but to set off to-morrow."



The father and daughter were not well-suited to one another—he was so slow and indolent and cold—she so full of impetuosity and fire. She had always to try and control herself to an unnatural composure and quietness before him, and the effort often fretted her. She used to feel sometimes like a caged animal when she was with him, trying to repress her young, eager life, and to bring herself into some kind of, at least, outward harmony with his slow and timid nature.

“Barker seems to think that it would be a good thing for me,—but I feel very doubtful of it myself—very doubtful indeed,” Mr. Treherne said. “The thing must be looked at from all points. I see a number of difficulties, even at the first glance.”

Mildred sat still, and listened with a quiet face. Presently, as her father talked, she began gent-

ly to smooth away the obstacles that he raised ; gaining confidence from success, she ventured gradually to plead and coax. She looked very handsome as she sat by his side, dexterously exercising her feminine wiles upon him ; and very likely (for he loved her, though she did not suit him) he thought so with some pride, and a sense of pleasure that he had begun to feel only lately. For Mildred Treherne was one of those girls who are not pretty as children, but who grow into beauty as they put on womanhood.

The question was left doubtful for a day or two ; but in the end Mildred's wishes prevailed, and it was settled that they were to go. Their preparations were made, and they set out from Treherne upon their journey on a moist September morning. A still day, soft and autumnal, soon to be bright with golden sunlight,

that was stealing already through the mist, and giving a shadowy beauty to the trees. They drove from the house along the well-kept avenue to the gates. How orderly, and trim, and full of English respectability, and of "drowsy felicities" of all kinds, the whole place was! Not a fallen leaf lay on the gravelled road over which their oiled wheels softly passed; not a sound was in the air harsher than the song of thrushes or of larks: the house door closed noiselessly behind them as they drove away; noiselessly the gates fell back upon their hinges, as they passed through them to the country road.

Not until long afterwards did Mildred think of all these things; but the time came when she did, and when she tried, with a strange mixture of emotions, and sometimes almost in vain, to recall the eager hopes and im-

patient longings with which she had turned for the last time from this quiet regularity, this ordered propriety, and set her face to the new and unknown world before her, that was to be so bright with its feverish and fitful lights,—so cruel, and so kind.

CHAPTER II.

THEY crossed from Folkstone to Boulogne, passed through that unattractive and mongrel town, and made their first pause at Amiens. They would go forward again the following day, and get to Paris, Mr. Treherne said; but when they had reached Amiens, Mildred liked the place, and pleaded for a little longer stay at it.

They had arrived upon a Wednesday evening.

"Let us remain till Friday, at least," she said. "There is so much to see."

She was full of excitement and happiness,

enjoying the present, and looking forward to the future, with a delight that half amazed and half touched Mr. Treherne. At home, where everything went on quiet and regular, like clockwork, Mildred's impetuosity (when he was aware of it) was nearly always an annoyance to her father; but we like many things abroad that we never like at home, and her keen interest in all that was around her almost pleased him now.

"I don't know what there is to see except the Cathedral," he replied to her with a laugh. "But if you can find enough to amuse yourself with, let us stay till Friday, by all means."

She had no difficulty in finding plenty to amuse herself with. She went again and again to the beautiful Cathedral, and feasted

her eyes and her heart upon its loveliness ; she carried her father, more than half against his will, to the old northern parts of the town, and lost herself and him amidst the myriad canal-like branches of the Somme that wind and flow in that strange region in front of the quaint dilapidated houses. It was hot, bright weather, and the sun shone on the murky water, and made it,—squalid and poor, and uncleansed as the whole place was,—look refreshing and almost pleasant, after the white dazzling pavements of the newer streets, and the dust in the broad boulevards.

She carried him to these, too, and made him buy her scores of things that struck her fancy in the tastefully decked shops. Like a child, she wanted everything she saw that was foreign-looking or new, and Mr. Treherne, who cared very little what he spent,

was ready to purchase all she took a fancy for.

The two days did not hang upon her hands; they passed, as she thought, only too quickly.

4 "Let' us go to say good-bye to the Cathedral," she said, on the third morning, when two more hours were to see them off to Paris.

They went out in the sunshine, across the hot Place St. Denis (they were staying at the Hôtel du Rhin) into the narrow, shady streets beyond, and so on to the west front of the church, where, under the deep porch, it was shady too, and cool and quiet.

"I wonder if they heat these cathedrals in winter? I daresay they do. All these things are well attended to, I suppose, in Catholic countries," Mr. Treherne said, as he pushed open one of the side doors, and they went in.

Mass was going on, and they sat down

near the entrance, and listened to the fresh young voices that were singing up somewhere that they could not see, far above their heads. They were very sweet voices, and the music was soft and low, with, at times, a sad kind of wail in it, that went to Mildred's heart. She sat very quiet for a long time, looking straight before her, through the choir, with its rich carved wood, to the high altar where the lights were burning and the priests moving to and fro, and watching the people as they knelt. Its mere novelty gave to the whole scene an indescribable charm in her eyes that was quite apart from all her feeling for its beauty. This was the third day that she had been here, yet the strangeness of it all had not worn away yet. She closed her eyes once or twice, and listened for a minute in the darkness; only to open them again and

look once more on everything about her with a happy, child-like face. Contented as she was, it was so difficult to realize that she was here, living the life that she had pictured to herself for so long—that in one sense for so long had been familiar to her—in the shadowy way in which we know things in a dream.

“We had better be moving now, my dear,” her father said, when at last the music, which had been loud and triumphant at the last, had ceased, and they were blowing out the lights, and the priests had filed down the stone steps and disappeared.

There were a good many other strangers in the church besides themselves, and already the pavement was getting stirred with steps going their rounds amongst the chapels, and a low hum of voices was in the air.

"We needn't go round again. We have seen everything, I suppose?" said Mr. Treherne, and took up his hat.

Mildred took her last look and came away. It was blindingly bright and hot and white outside—a painful contrast to the tempered shade and coolness within the church.

"It seems to me that this kind of climate is rather trying," Mr. Treherne remarked, after a minute. "Of course there are few things so bad as our English fogs, but—What's the matter?—take care, my dear!" he cried.

But it was too late to cry "Take care!" for Mildred, in turning back for a last lingering look, had stepped incautiously on something lying on the pavement—a piece of orange-peel, a loose stone—I hardly know what—and before her father could come to her aid she slipped and fell.

"Give me your hand, Papa. Oh! I am afraid I have twisted my foot," she said.


And, trying to rise for a moment, she sank back again with a little cry of pain.

"God bless me, my dear, I hope not!" said Mr. Treherne.

Around them were the quiet, unpeopled streets, and before them the Cathedral standing in the sun.

"I wonder how we can get any help!" Mr. Treherne exclaimed, in great distress, and for a few moments stood staring helplessly to right and left; then suddenly he perceived a figure emerging from a turning near at hand, and eagerly hailed it in imperfect French.

"Monsieur, pouvez vous m'assister? Nous avons eu un accident. Ma fille a tombée, et a



blesée sa—blesée sa—” repeated Mr. Treherne excitedly, unable to think of the word that should come next.

The stranger had come quickly towards them.

“I am afraid you are a good deal hurt?” he said, looking at Mildred.

It was an unmistakable English voice.

Mr. Treherne, whose face had been getting puckered with anxiety, brightened at the sound of it, as if it rid him of half his perplexity at once.

“Why, you’re an Englishman!” he cried in quite an altered tone; and the other gave a moment’s laugh.

“Yes, I’m an Englishman,” he said. “Are you staying at any hotel here?—The Hôtel du Rhin? Very well, then, you had better let me go and send you a fiacre; for if your

daughter has sprained her ankle, she can't walk there."

"But I am not sure it is sprained; and I hope it may not be," poor Mildred said, still sitting on the ground, and, girl-like, feeling the undignified nature of her position before a stranger, and before the passers-by (for other people had come up now, and one or two had lingered to stare at them), not a little. "If you would give me your arm again, Papa, I think I could get up," she said.

And she did get up with a little difficulty, though her face became white with pain in doing it.

"If you could manage to cross the street, that house opposite is a doctor's—the tall one, where the blinds are down. Do you think you could try?" the stranger asked, watching her as he spoke.

She answered, "Yes," at once, and immediately prepared to move.

"Lean all your weight upon me, my dear," her father told her.

"I don't know whether my arm or my stick would help you most. Take my arm first," the stranger said.

And she took it: she was in enough pain to make her take any support gladly.

Between them, they carried her across the street, and got her safely to the doctor's door. He was at home, and as soon as the stranger learnt this he took his leave of them.

"I will have a fiacre for you here in a few minutes," he said, and raised his hat to Mildred as he turned away.

In another minute she was under the doctor's hands, a clever, alert, kindly little Frenchman, who did his work upon her gently and ex-

pertly. Yes, the ankle was sprained, he said. Mademoiselle must make up her mind to be a prisoner for some little time. For how long, did Monsieur ask? Well, these little accidents were tedious sometimes; suppose he said a couple of weeks. It might be longer—it might be less; but, at any rate, in the meantime Mademoiselle must keep strictly to the sofa. He had for the present done all, and given all the directions that were necessary. In the course of the afternoon he would do himself the honour of calling at the Hôtel du Rhin. And then the servant announced that the fiacre was at the door, and the little doctor gave his arm to Mildred, and dexterously helped her into it.

Their unknown friend, who had apparently not only ordered the vehicle, but taken the precaution of accompanying it, was standing in the

street as they came out. Hastily feeling for his card-case, and drawing a card from it, Mr. Treherne went up to him.

"We shall be detained here for some time, it seems," he said. "It's very annoying, but, of course, it can't be helped. I don't know if we may hope for the pleasure of seeing you again? Are you making any stay in Amiens?"

"I shall be here probably for a day or two," the stranger said. "If you will allow me, I should like to call and see how your daughter is. I haven't a card with me, I am afraid—" (Mr. Treherne, as he made his speech, had presented him with his)—"but my name is Philip Romney, and I live in Paris."

"Well, if you will come and see us, we shall be very glad to have another opportunity of thanking you for your kindness," Mr. Treherne said.

And then they shook hands, and, with one or two civil words to Mildred, Mr. Romney took his leave.


"That girl must be very handsome when she has got a little colour in her face," he thought to himself, as he went quickly down the street.

He had a habit of walking with long, swift, swinging steps, that carried him over the ground he traversed with an easy rapidity, pleasant to look at. Mildred watched him as he went, and thought so.

"Is he a soldier, Papa?—he looks like one," she said.

"I don't know, my dear. He merely said that his name was Philip Romney, and that he lives in Paris. But he may possibly be a soldier," Mr. Treherne said. "I shouldn't wonder that he was."

Norah was in a good deal of pain, and was




thankful to reach her sofa and to lie down ; she was vexed, too, about the accident, for her father's sake.

"I am so very sorry. If it *must* have happened, I wish so that it had happened in Paris," she said, in genuine distress. "I don't know what you are to do with yourself here for two whole weeks."

But Mr. Treherne, who was too indolent to be ever in a hurry, took the matter good-humouredly enough.

"It is worse for you than for me, my dear," he said. "As far as I am concerned a quiet week or two is no great hardship. I'll go over to that old man's shop in the square presently, and see what I can find amongst his books ; he has some rather curious things." And, comforting himself with the prospect of doing this, Mr. Treherne sat down for the present to read his French newspaper.

Their sitting-room was on the ground floor, and their open windows looked out on the pleasant hotel garden, all bright with the mid-day sun. It shone on the flowers, and on the walks, and on the polished silver balls, which (whether purely for ornament, or whether for use as a questionable kind of looking-glass, Mildred never succeeded in discovering) stood gleaming there on their little pedestals amongst the leaves. Mildred had never seen such balls anywhere before, and she and her father had laughed at them together, and been very much amused by them at first. They were so fantastic, and childish, and French, they said. And then she had begun to like them a little, and to declare, half in jest, that she would set up silver balls in their own garden at Treherne when she got home. (But she never did this. The gardens at Treherne have no silver balls in them to this day.)



In the afternoon Mr. Treherne went to the old book-shop in the Place, and brought back with him an armful of dingy-looking volumes, over which he spent most of the remainder of the day.

The doctor, M. Fernier, called before dinner, and felt Mildred's ankle with the tips of his expert fingers, and declared himself enchanted with the way in which his patient was submitting to her imprisonment. He sat with her for a quarter of an hour, and amused her with his cheery talk. He had lived in Amiens all his life, and knew every nook and corner of the town, and had a genuine enthusiasm for it. Mildred was a little shy of exhibiting her not too fluent French before him, so that he had the greater part of the talk to himself; but she could ask him questions, and follow his voluminous answers readily enough.

In the evening, after sunset, Mr. Romney made his call.


"Do you mind my coming at this hour?" he asked, as Mr. Treherne rose up to greet him. "I thought that perhaps you would not be engaged."

Mildred had just been beginning to find the hours hang a little wearily on her hands, and to wonder how the evening was to pass. She felt glad when Mr. Romney came in.

"We are delighted to see you. Indeed, you could not do better than come at this time," Mr. Treherne told him heartily, "for the hours after dark are those that we shall know least what to do with."

"So I imagined," Mr. Romney said. And then he sat down, and they began to talk.

The Trehernes had only been a few days abroad, and yet in her heart even Mildred



thought presently that it was a pleasant thing to come suddenly on an English face.

"Do you know much of the Continent?" Mr. Treherne asked his visitor after a little while. "Have you lived in Paris long?"

"I have lived in Paris, off and on, for a dozen years," was the answer; "and I have spent some time in pretty nearly every city of any note between this and St. Petersburg."

On this Mildred's eyes began to brighten.

"How I should like to do that too! How much more you ought to know than other people!" she said abruptly.

He looked towards her and laughed.

"Knowledge is not always enviable. I may have seen more than many people without being any the better for it," he said.

"I don't know how you could help being the better for it," she answered quickly; "I

have been wanting so to travel all my life."

"When I was as young as you are I dare say I felt too much as you do now," Mr. Romney said after a moment's silence; "but I have had wandering enough since those days to cool my enthusiasm. You will find, if you try it long enough, Miss Treherne, that the taste for travelling, like all other tastes, palls upon you in time."

"I have only learnt as yet that the taste for staying at home palls upon me," she replied, colouring a little and half laughing.

"Do you think you have ever known what the taste for staying at home *is* yet?" he said. "It seems to me, as far as my experience goes, to be a taste that comes rarely till most others are exhausted."

He spoke in a half-jesting, half-bitter tone. Mr. Treherne, not much liking either it or

his words, cleared his throat, and proceeded to bring back the conversation to its starting-point.

“Now, taking Continental cities—those you have known best—which of them should you say, on the whole, was the most pleasant as a place of residence?” he began, in a judicial voice.

Mildred leant upon her sofa and listened, looking, as she lay quiet, at Philip Romney’s face. It was a face worth looking at—a face that was very fine after its kind, though to Mildred this first night not entirely satisfying. She remembered afterwards that she had thought so, and that to-night what she had cared for mainly had been his soldierly bearing, and his supple ease and grace and harmony of movement. These pleased her eye—his face scarcely did at first. She lay looking at it, as he and her father talked,

admiring it in some degree, yet finding fault with expressions that came into it—not able to make out from it at all what kind of man he was.

Mr. Treherne had returned to the subject of his visitor's travels, and it proved to be a prolific one. Mr. Romney had seen much, and could talk well of what he had seen. In half an hour they were almost on familiar terms with one another, and before the end of that time Mildred's eyes had begun to kindle, and the light to come into her face. For this man had lived a life the hearing of which stirred her blood—a life compared with which hers, beside their far-off English village, seemed almost like a living death. She began presently to put eager questions to him. In her manner, when she was roused, there was always something curiously earnest, half impetuous, unconven-

tional; it was not polished, but it had an intense individuality about it that gave it a certain interest not possible to be achieved by the smoothness and completeness of other girls. She was unconscious, too. As she sat now half raised upon her sofa, putting her rapid questions one after another, it never occurred to her to wonder what Mr. Romney was thinking of her; she forgot herself while she listened to him; she was entirely natural, girlish, immature. And yet there were already signs of undeveloped strength about her—a promise of keenness and clearness of brain, of depth and passionateness of heart. She was only nineteen yet, and at nineteen women like Mildred Treherne are only half-formed. She was excited and happy as she talked to Philip Romney, but it was an excitement with which her head had far more to do than her heart.

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The eager girl thirsting for knowledge was thinking—to-night at least—mainly of the knowledge itself, and not of the medium through which it reached her.

Mr. Romney had meant to make a half-hour's call, but he ended by passing nearly all the evening with them. They were going to have coffee, they told him, when he first rose to bid them good night; would he not sit down again and take a cup with them? So he sat down again, and when the coffee came he carried Mildred's to her as she lay upon the sofa, performing that little service for the first time which to them both grew so familiar presently. It was a service that was performed by him to-night thoughtlessly and indifferently enough, with merely the easy but half careless courtesy with which, in his relations with women, he did most things.

For whatever might be either Philip Romney's faults or virtues, the qualities that make a carpet-knight were not amongst them; nature, at least, had fashioned him for something higher than that.

It was nearly ten o'clock when he at last left them. They had talked of many things; they had made plans too for meeting again together on the following day. By Mr. Romney's account the Trehernes had not seen nearly the whole of what was interesting in Amiens, so it was arranged that in the morning he should come and take Mr. Treherne to some of these unvisited sights. Was he certain he could spare the time? they asked him. Yes, he could spare the time easily. He was merely waiting here to see some one who was to pass through Amiens in a day or two. He was an idle man, and was richer in time, he said,

with a moment's frank laugh, than in most other things. And then he had turned to Mildred.

"Is there nothing I could do for *you*?" he said to her. "You will find it very tedious to lie here, I am afraid. Have you books enough, or can I get you any?"

"Could you get me some? I should be so glad," she answered, gratefully.

"I could get you some easily. You read French, I suppose?"

"Ye—s," she answered, with a little hesitation. "Only I am afraid I would rather read English."

"You can read English when you go home again," he told her. "French will be very good practice for you now."

"Very well, then," she said with a smile, and held out her hand to bid good night to him.

"You have not far to go home. That is the comfort of these small towns," Mr. Treherne said.

"No, I have not far to go, but I am not going in yet—I am going to smoke a cigar upon the ramparts," he said as he took his leave.

"He's a gentlemanly, accomplished kind of man, and agreeable, too,—to a certain extent," Mr. Treherne said to his daughter when he and she were left alone again.

"Yes," Mildred answered, rather absently.

"I can't make out what he is, though."

"Do you think he is anything?"

"Hm!—well—I don't know. You mean he may be a man of property, do you?"

"I meant he might have enough to live on—don't you think so?"

"I suppose he has enough to live on, since

he *does* live somehow ; but I should doubt about its being very much. However, he's a pleasant enough acquaintance, and certainly a very striking-looking man."

"Yes," Mildred said again.

"I haven't seen a finer face or figure for a long time. What age, now, should you guess him to be? I should say five-and-thirty."

"Yes, I suppose so—about five-and-thirty."

"Except, indeed, that he may look older than he is. Men who go so much about the world often do. A curious kind of vagabond life he seems to have led!"

Mildred laughed. Mr. Romney's account of his life had been making the blood leap in her veins for the last two hours ; what had roused in her father, with his profound love for all that was respectable and decorous, only a feeling of surprise and half contempt, had kindled

in her sensations of a very different and opposite kind.

"I suppose it *has* been a vagabond life, but it must have been a very pleasant one," she said after a moment. "I think if I were a man I should like to lead one like it."

"Then I am very glad you are *not* a man, my dear," Mr. Treherne replied with some asperity.

And, though Mildred merely held her tongue and let the subject drop, Mr. Treherne was in the right. For the life that Philip Romney had led was not a life to be copied or admired. The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, however, was a very tempting fruit to Mildred in her youth: she envied those who had the power of eating of it; she would have eaten of it herself, if, like

a second Eve, she had been tempted with it in Paradise.

"That girl has a whole world of passion in her eyes," Mr. Romney said to himself, as he smoked his cigar upon the ramparts. "I wonder what will become of her!"

Perhaps before he went home that night he had drawn in his mind his own first sketch of what *might* become of her. She was beautiful, and her father was rich; and Philip Romney was needy, and an adventurer.

CHAPTER III.

MR. ROMNEY brought the books to Mildred next morning that he had promised to procure for her. They were merely light books—a batch of novels, and a volume or two of Molière.

Mr. Treherne looked a little uneasy at first when he saw them.

“I don’t know that this is exactly the sort of thing. French novels, you know—” he said, and hesitated.

“Oh! there are varieties in French novels as in most other things. You need not be afraid of these ones,” Mr. Romney an-

swered, and he carried the books to Mildred's side, and began to talk to her about them.

He did not sit down, for he and Mr. Treherne were going out together, but merely stood beside her sofa for two or three minutes.

"I shall be quite happy with these all the morning. Thank you so much," she said, and looked up to him gratefully.

It was a bright, fresh, beautiful young face, and he thought so to himself, with real admiration, as he watched it,—even while, at the same moment, he was inwardly calculating the chances in favour of her being got to play the little part that he had sketched out for her in his moonlight meditations last night with a coolness which, if she could have known it, would perhaps have changed the course of all her future life. But she knew nothing of it,

and when he left her she turned in happy ignorance to the books that he had brought, thinking of him nothing but kind and grateful thoughts.

She had dreamed last night of the things that he had told her; her face had brightened just now when he had come in. Unconsciously to herself he had already in some degree touched her imagination—he had begun to affect her like a splendid picture. More than once this morning while she lay alone reading her thoughts went wandering from her book, and she found herself thinking of him,—speculating about him.

When, after two or three hours, her father returned to her without his companion she felt a momentary touch of disappointment. She had thought that perhaps they would come back together.

"I asked him to come in to lunch, but he had an engagement," Mr. Treherne said.

And then Mildred began to feel the afternoon a little wearisome, and to wish presently that something would happen to make a break in the day.

Nothing did happen, except that M. Fernier came, and made a slight diversion for a solitary half hour; but Mildred did not care especially to-day for M. Fernier. She was already rather tired of her imprisonment. She lay for a long time after the doctor had gone away with her book upon her knees, looking out into the garden, and trying to amuse herself with watching the people who came and went. It was very bright and cheerful-looking out there. Now and then, too, she heard an English voice, and liked the sound of it amongst the clatter of French tongues. But to lie still, and watch the

appearance and disappearance of unfamiliar faces is an amusement that, in course of time, becomes monotonous, and Mildred tired of it too presently, and went back again to her book with a little sigh.

She had to be contented with such amusement as she could get from it for the remainder of the evening. Mr. Treherne went out for a solitary ramble before dinner. "It's very dull for you, my dear," he said, pityingly to Mildred, and would not have left her, but that she made him do it.

"I suppose I ought not to grumble at having to pay for my own carelessness," she said.

But she yawned at least, if she did not grumble, and she thought the day very long.

"Surely I shall be able to move about again in less than a fortnight?" she said to herself next morning.

She was beginning to think that a fortnight spent on a hotel sofa, even though that hotel was a foreign one (and foreign things for Mildred had at this time an indescribable attraction), would be an almost insupportable weariness. What was she to do day after day? She was tired of looking out of her window, tired of her books, tired of herself. Philip Romney scarcely guessed how glad she was to see him when, after she had been lying alone for a couple of hours this second morning, one of the waiters announced his name.

"I promised Mr. Treherne to come and tell you what had become of him," he said to her, "for fear you should think he had lost himself" (Mr. Treherne had gone out after breakfast, on the vague errand of taking 'a half-hour's turn,' and had not been seen since). "I met him half an hour ago, and took him to the

Bibliothèque, and at his own desire I have left him there."

"That was kind of you," she said. "And so, having performed one charitable office upon him, are you going to extend your charity by looking after me too?" she asked, and looked up to him with a half doubtful smile, which, next moment, as their eyes met, deepened into a laugh.

"I wish you would *let* me look after you," he replied. "I thought of you yesterday, and wondered what you were doing all day. I was greatly tempted in the evening to come and talk to you and Mr. Treherne again."

"Were you? You should have come."

"I hadn't the face to impose myself upon you for two nights running."

"But Papa would have liked it. We should both have liked it. If you would come to us

again—this evening, or any other—we should be quite grateful; for, you see, we don't know a creature here."

"Thank you; but I hardly know yet whether I shall be in Amiens after to-day."

"Oh! are you going away? I thought——"

"I have been waiting to see some one who sent me word to-day that he would be here this afternoon."

"Oh!" again, and then a moment's pause.

"And after you have seen him, will there be nothing more to detain you here?"

"I hardly know. There may be, but I cannot say."

"If you were to leave, would you go on to Paris?"

"Yes, I shall go on to Paris."

Mildred lay still, looking out into the garden, where the sun was shining on the silver balls.

She was sorry to think that Mr. Romney might be going away. She had fancied that he would be here for, at any rate, a few more days.

"You must tell me if I can be of any use to you in Paris," he said. "Do you know many people there?"

"In Paris? Oh! no, no one at all. We have brought one single letter of introduction—to an English family, some people called Hamilton—but that is all. Papa would not have any others. He said it was no use to bring introductions to French people, because, you see, it is such a labour to him to speak French."

"And these Hamiltons—do they know you are coming?"

"No, they know nothing about us—nor we of them."

"So they are not likely to take possession of you as soon as you arrive? I am questioning you from a selfish motive, you know, because I want you to let *me* do something for you."

"I think we shall be very glad. We have not been very slow in letting you do something for us already, have we?" she said, and looked up to him with frank, smiling eyes. "I think if we were to throw ourselves as much upon you in Paris as we have begun to do here——"

"I wish you would," he interrupted her quickly. "There is nothing I should like better than to have you on my hands."

"What, with all our ignorance?" she said laughing.

"Yes, with all your ignorance—and with all your enthusiasm."

"If I showed you much of my enthusiasm, I suspect I should bore you terribly," she said, colouring a little.

"Your enthusiasm would do anything rather than bore me. I should like to see it exceedingly."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because I look on enthusiasm as one of the most beautiful things in the world. Why should you think that I don't care for it?"

"I thought, from the way you spoke, that you meant to laugh at it."

"No, I don't laugh at it. I honour and admire and envy it. I would give most of what I have in the world if I could bring back the days when I was an enthusiast myself, as you are now."

She was looking in his face with grave, large eyes.

"And cannot you?" she said abruptly, after a moment's silence.

He shook his head with a half laugh.

"How do you think I could set about it?" he said. "Enthusiasm is part of the bloom of youth. I might as soon hope to bring back the years that have passed as to make myself once more in feeling what I was when I was a boy."

"Mr. Romney, I don't see that."

"No, I don't suppose you do."

"I don't see that people must be merely boys and girls to be enthusiasts."

"Most people, I think, put off enthusiasm when they put off youth."

"Then they ought not to do it—they need not do it. If they throw away their enthusiasm, they throw away one of the best things they can ever have."

"But suppose they can't help themselves? Suppose it goes (as it does go, I should fancy, in most cases) without their will?"

"It wouldn't go if they cared to keep it."


"Is that your theory?"

"Is it not a true theory? If we laugh at our enthusiasm as we grow old, how can it stay with us?"

"But if we can't help laughing at it?"

He was sitting within a step or two of her sofa, leaning one arm over the back of his chair, and looking at her with a curious, half-interested, half-amused look. The two faces made a strong contrast; hers was so earnest and eager, his so jesting and indifferent; each was looking in the other's eyes, but no two pairs of eyes could well have expressed more opposite feelings.

"But if we can't help laughing at it?"



"I think, if we took refuge in such an argument as that, we might laugh at everything."

"I am afraid, as we grow old, there are a great many of us who *do* laugh at everything."

The large eyes opened wider for a moment—half as though she was questioning if he was speaking seriously—half, he thought, in indignation.

"And are *they*, too, only doing what is unavoidable, do you think?" she said after a moment, rather scornfully.

"They are doing what their instinct and experience lead them to do, I imagine."

"Then instinct and experience must be two mournful teachers!"

"I daresay they often are."

"They must be, at least, if they *do* teach

what you say. But I don't believe it. I think they are kinder to us. I think it is our own fault if we ever take to laughing at what—at what we ought to reverence."

"Who is to be the judge of what we ought to reverence? The Greeks revered gods and goddesses who were steeped in the worst human vices; one of the most sacred things in creation to a Hindoo is a cow."

"And the most sacred things to *us* are faith and love, and truth and honour," she said rapidly, and with the colour springing up into her face.

"Faith and love are rather unsteady reeds to lean on; as for truth, it is a dull virtue; and honour is something of a vague word, Miss Treherne. I have heard of very questionable things being done in *its* name."

“Questionable things can be done in any name, I suppose, easily enough; but, true honour remains true honour whether people misunderstand it or not.”

“I daresay;—only how are we to find out what *is* true honour?—or true faith?—or true love?—or truth itself? There *is* such a thing as truth, probably, but how can we ever know whether we have got it or not? And suppose we have not got it, but only imagine that we have, and reverence error instead, how are we any better than the Hindoo and his cow? The Hindoo thinks we are in the wrong, and we think he is. Suppose the Hindoo should be right?”

The handsome mocking face was looking at her with scarcely suppressed laughter. She had knitted her brows for a moment or two, in the earnest effort to follow his argument;

but suddenly her gravity relaxed, and she laughed too.

"You are trying to puzzle me, but I am not going to give you the satisfaction of hearing me say something foolish," she said.

"I don't want you to say something foolish—I want you to say something wise."

"But you know I can't do that."

"How should I know it? You are an enthusiast, and is not enthusiasm inspiration?"

"I think the highest enthusiasm is."

"It should have been put amongst your sacred things, then, should it not?"

"Mr. Romney, you are laughing at me, and yet I think you know in your heart that it is one of the noblest and most beautiful things in all the world."

"Did not I tell you just now that I did

know that? I have only been laughing at your supposition that we could keep it all our lives."

"But that is the very thing I think you ought not to laugh at. Why should we not keep it? Must we leave off believing in what is beautiful and good because we grow old?"

"We must leave off believing in a great deal that at one period of our lives *seems* good and beautiful when we grow old; unless, indeed, we would wish always to remain children."

"Yes; but we may do that, and still keep all the best part of our enthusiasm."

"I am afraid few people do."

"I think a good many do."

"Winter peaches, with the bloom still on them?"

"You may call them winter peaches, if you like."

"Venerable people, with young heads on old shoulders?"

"They need not have anything but the heads that are properly suited to their years. I only want them to have young hearts."

Mr. Romney gave a laugh, and rose from his seat.

"I think, perhaps, you have the best of the argument," he said; "only don't take it for granted that young hearts are to be had for the wishing. Some of us are driven to lead lives that make our hearts, as well as all the rest of us, old before our time. We can't help ourselves always in these matters, Miss Treherne."

He held out his hand to her.

"I am keeping you too long from your

books," he said. "After all this, will you still let me come again to-night?"

"Oh! yes, Papa will like to see you. I hope you will come," she said.

And then they shook hands, and she spent another solitary hour before Mr. Treherne came back.

Perhaps it was rather an idle hour, too, as well as a solitary one. She had her books to amuse her; but, though Mr. Romney said he had kept her from them too long, she did not seem in any especial hurry when he had left her to return to them.

Instead of reading, she lay on her sofa and thought of him. The talk that they had just had together ought, perhaps, to have done little to increase her liking for him; perhaps her feeling at the end of it ought to have been one mainly of pity or scorn for him; but

our feelings are not always what they ought to be, and, in point of fact, Mildred cared more for Philip Romney now than she had done an hour ago. She had not liked what he had said; she had disagreed with him, and he had made her feel hot and angry; but yet, for all that, she lay and thought of him when he was gone, with something that was very nearly a conscious desire to see him, and hear his voice again. For it was a fine, musical, clear-cutting voice; she liked the sound of it, dislike its words as she might; and to-day, too, she liked his face: whatever might be either its negative or positive faults, its beauty had begun by this time to cast its glamour over her.

It was a still, warm, sunny day. The bees were humming outside in the shadeless garden; the window was open, and hot breaths of air came in upon her. She liked the warmth and

the sunshine. She was tired, idle, half in pain, and yet she felt as if she had gained something which, in spite of the weariness of her imprisonment, kept her from being lonely or unhappy.

She was glad to think that she should see Philip Romney again at night. Presently she thought that she would like to dress before the evening came, and the thought pleased her. Yesterday and the day before she had lain all day upon the sofa in her travelling-dress, not caring, difficult as all moving was to her, to change it for another; but this afternoon she felt a sudden desire to make herself look better than she could have done yet in Philip Romney's eyes. She called her maid, and told her to open one of the trunks that had been packed for Paris, and take one of her white dresses out of it: and then she per-

formed her toilette,—feeling all the time that she did it half amused at herself, and half ashamed—and wondering, too, with a girlish, half-shy wonder what Philip Romney would think of her—what he thought of her already. For to Mildred the consciousness of possessing beauty had only come very lately—so lately, that even yet the thought of being beautiful, in its new delight, was strange and unreal to her, and she hardly could believe what she was in other people's eyes. She thought to-day, as she was dressing, that perhaps Mr. Romney might not even think her pretty.

But Mr. Romney must have possessed a far less keen appreciation of beauty than he did if he could have seen Mildred for these three days, and not have perceived yet how lovely she was. She might have kept her mind at ease; he had found that out quickly enough.

He came back, as he had promised to do, after dinner, and spent all the rest of the evening with them; and made it pleasant, too, to both of them, for he was a man who, when he chose, could easily make himself agreeable. With Mr. Treherne, who had a great deal of half-shy, half-obstinate English reserve about him, he got on excellently. Strangers at most ordinary times were a sort of bugbear to Mildred's father; he had none of the readiness of tongue or grace of manner which sets people quickly at ease with one another, and was hampered and worried generally by all society that was not familiar to him. But Philip Romney entertained him, and, though he was too indolent a man ever to go in search of amusement, yet at the bottom of his heart he liked to be entertained. He had always lived a quiet life, reading a good deal, but mixing

with the world scarcely at all ; and the wide practical knowledge of a man like Mr. Romney was in many ways strange and new to him. Philip had travelled far, seen much, and forgotten nothing. "You never seem to look at things more than other people do," Mildred said to him once, long after this, "and yet you always make me feel as if everything you saw got photographed somewhere in your mind."

"What would be the use of learning things at all," he answered, "if we were to forget them afterwards? I like to remember what I see. Perhaps I shall be old and blind some day, and then I can sit in the chimney-corner, and live my life again." Yet probably his expectation of a blind old age had little to do in making Mr. Romney what he was now. Nature had been at the bottom of that, in

giving him a retentive memory, a clear brain, and a quick eye.

The talk all this evening never flagged. Possibly afterwards—when to-morrow came—they might wonder what they had all talked of, and find it difficult to recall the twentieth part of what had made the hours pass so quickly; but at the time it seemed all too natural to think or wonder about at all. Mildred only knew how fast the words had often risen to her lips, and for how long Philip Romney had sat beside her, answering the questions that she put to him about a hundred things. She had a curious feeling while he sat so, as though she were reading from a book in which all things that she desired to know were written. And so perhaps she was, and from a book that was already becoming a dangerous one to her. For did she think nothing, do you imagine, of its

beauty as she read from it?—or care nothing for the sound of the words it spoke to her? For half the evening she and Philip looked into each other's eyes, and when it was ended neither of them forgot that.

“That night in your white dress you looked to me like some pure spirit come out of another world,” he said to her, when they were once speaking in after-times of these first days.

To her, perhaps, there was in him no look of any other world than this; but at this time to Mildred the bloom was on the earth, and the earth's beauty was enough for her. It was no loveliness from another sphere, then or afterwards, that ever drew her to Philip Romney.

The shortening September day closed in soon. They sat for a good while in the

warm twilight, with the scent of stock and mignonette coming in to them from the garden beyond; and then Mr. Treherne, who cared less for mignonette than for light and comfort, rang the bell for candles, and Philip stretched across Mildred's sofa to close the open window.

He had been sitting near to her before this for some little time.

"What sort of country is it round about here?" Mr. Treherne had asked, while they were still in the twilight. "If you were disposed to go with me, I should rather like some morning to have a good long walk, in one direction or other."

"I will go with you any day you like," Philip said.

"But are you not going to Paris?" Mildred asked, and turned her face to him quickly.

“Not immediately, I think.”

“Did your friend not come to-day?”

“Yes, and he is coming again.”

“Oh!—and you are going to wait for him?”

“I am going to wait for a few days, at any rate.”

“I had forgotten that you were thinking of going,” Mr. Treherne said. “That would have been a sad loss to us. I am afraid that you must let us be selfish enough to be glad that we are to have you near us a little longer.”

“I am glad of it myself,” Mr. Romney answered. “Amiens is more pleasant to me at present than it ever was before. I was very glad to-day to find an excuse for remaining in it a little longer.”

And then they began to arrange a day

for their expedition to the country ; and when the lights came Mildred's face looked glad.

"Are all French windows like this one ? Papa and I can never give that queer handle the right twist," she said, as Philip bent across her.

He laughed as he made the two leaves fast.

"I will give you a lesson how to do it some day," he said. And then he sat down near to her again, and probably saw the light that had come into her eyes ; and perhaps knew, too, what had brought it there. For Mildred in her youth erred often on the side of unreserve. She learnt reticence afterwards, but she had not learnt it in the days when she knew Philip Romney first.

"Will you look in on us to-morrow, then, after breakfast?—and if the day is fine we can have our walk," Mr. Treherne said, before he left them.

They had this evening planned a number of things that they were to do together, not so much here in Amiens as presently, when Mildred should be well again, in Paris. Mr. Romney suggested these various things, and Mr. Treherne fell in with his suggestions readily. He only gave way once as they talked to a momentary hesitation.

"You must not let us be too great a tax upon you. Of course the more of your time you may be able to give us the better," he said, "but we must not throw ourselves upon you entirely."

"Oh, we will arrange all that very easily," Mr. Romney answered. "When you begin to

know Paris a little, I daresay you will prefer to go about by yourselves, but I should like to be of some little use to you at first."

"I am sure you will be of the greatest possible use to us," Mr. Treherne said gratefully: and then they began to talk about the Paris sights.

He had a charm of manner about him that often made people almost unconsciously appeal to him, and depend upon him. Many a one before this had trusted him; and many a one, perhaps, had found in time that that seductive grace was a cloak that covered a multitude of sins. For Philip Romney had been a confirmed Bohemian from his boyhood, and Bohemianism, if it sometimes fosters some rude kind of virtues, fosters a heavy crop of vices too. He was at bottom no worse than

many men, but his grace of person and his subtlety of tongue gave him a power of doing evil that many another man has not.

CHAPTER IV.


THERE were a score of different ways in which Philip Romney could make himself of use to the Trehernes, and he took advantage of them all. Mr. Treherne's natural shyness and intense dislike to talk a language that was unfamiliar to him, made him singularly ineffective in managing anything for himself, either in the way of pleasure or of business. Conscious to some extent of his defects, he had brought a travelling valet with him, to whom, before Philip's advent, all arrangements and matters of business were

intended to be entrusted; but in a week after the acquaintance with Mr. Romney had begun this man found his place—as far as his most important duties were concerned—almost a sinecure: for already, when his master wanted information, he had come to find it far the pleasantest way to seek it from Mr. Romney; when annoyances or difficulties of any sort arose, Mr. Romney seemed to have an especial genius for smoothing them away: when plans had to be made Mr. Romney showed himself unquestionably the most efficient person to make them. Without Mr. Treherne being more than half conscious of it, in fact, Philip took possession of him, talked for him when talking was necessary, directed him whenever he wanted direction, made every day pleasant to him.

And if he did all this for the father, for

the daughter he did still more. Every day brought him to Mildred's side, and generally not once or twice only, but again and again. Sometimes he would only come to her for a few minutes, perhaps to bring her a new book or a bunch of flowers: often he would come and stay with her for hours, and read to her and talk with her. Mr. Treherne grew so accustomed to his coming, that—being a man not given to suspicion—he would himself stay with them or leave them as it suited his convenience without a moment's hesitation. It never at this time struck him that Mr. Romney—a man so much older than herself—could be in danger of becoming his daughter's lover. There was nothing in his manner that ever seemed to him lover-like, or roused any suspicion whatever in him. And, indeed, if Mr. Treherne (as is likely) would only have

supposed a man's manner to be lover-like when it was a compound of humble eagerness and timid devotion, it was no wonder that he guessed little of what was going on from anything that he saw in Philip Romney at present. For Philip wooed in a more lordly way than this. He gave his time, his thoughts, his care to Mildred, but humility in her presence was a thing he never dreamt of. Even to any looker-on who understood it it might have seemed a light kind of love-making, half flattering, half daring; for in all he did, even in what his heart was set upon most deeply, there was always outwardly in Philip Romney a sort of surface of indifference, as if he were but half in earnest, and half merely playing with the thing he wanted. It was only at single moments of his life—the great crises which come rarely—that he



was ever in appearance wholly serious. But still for all that he could make a woman that he loved know that he loved her. Perhaps no woman who had ever cared for him had yet found fault with his manner to her. Certainly Mildred Treherne did not. Enthusiastic and passionate-hearted as she was, he satisfied her. *He* could have told, perhaps, though Mr. Treherne suspected it so little, how soon she began to live upon the food that his acts and his words and his presence gave her. Lying alone all day upon her sofa, what else had she to live on?—what else would she ever have so sweet to live on in this world? She grew to love the little formal room, the bright, fresh garden that her window looked upon, the clear French sunlight that came in so joyously, till its brightness almost blinded her. In after years, what

place did she ever see so dear to her as this ?

“How I shall remember this room always ! Does it not seem as if we had been here a long, long time ?” she said to Philip once.

Smoking his cigar that first night upon the ramparts, Mr. Romney had coolly resolved within himself that he would woo this girl, and get her, if he could, to marry him. He had decided on doing this wholly irrespective of any question as to falling in love with her. She was beautiful, and he liked her, but he did not want to make her his wife either because of her beauty or her pleasantness ; he wanted her for his wife only because she was rich.

But when they had been a few days together a better thing befell Philip Romney than he deserved. He looked into her eyes

till the half-slumbering passion in them gradually roused the whole passion in his own nature. He came to her to do her a great wrong, and he stayed beside her to love her with his whole heart and soul. Even before the end of the second evening that they spent together he had begun to feel that it was very sweet to him to be with her. That night, as he walked home, he knew that she was beginning to be dear to him, and he was honest enough to be glad that it was so. He went away from her with a glow about his heart. The touch of her hand within his as he parted from her had thrilled him—the tones of her voice had been sweet as music to him. In all sincerity after this night he meant to do no wrong to Mildred. That the love he came to have for her was selfish and cruel may be very true, but men like Philip Rom-

ney *are* cruel. It may be true, too, that he had little pity on her even when he loved her best; but at least from this time he pretended no devotion to her that he did not feel; his wooing of her henceforward became one of the most honest acts of his whole life.

And she knew that he loved her: by the time that she knew her own love for him she knew this, learning it with such a passionate joy and gratitude that all her girlish dreams of happiness became colourless and faded away before the reality of this great blessing. And yet she already knew something of what he was: even her eyes, dazzled as they were, had perceived some of the many stains upon him. She knew he was not good; she knew that his life had been wild and wasted. But still, with all the natural im-

petuous passion of her heart, she trusted him, and believed in him,—believed in his original nobleness, and in his power to regain it. All his faults, all his shortcomings, seemed to her like blots upon the surface; wherever she pierced deep she found—or thought she found—him still noble and true. I do not try to justify her, or to ask anyone to think that she was right. Perhaps her only justification lay in the two facts, that she was but nineteen, and that Philip Romney had come to her like a revelation.

There were moments when she thought with vague dread of the ending of these Amiens days, and tortured herself with fear that when their fresh life in Paris should begin he would be less with her than he was now. He would have other things to do in Paris—other friends to go to—possibly other women

(though her heart cried out a passionate protest against that), by whose side he might care to sit and talk, almost (oh! surely, even at the very worst, it could be but *almost!*) as he sat by hers now. If it were to be so, she used to think, and she were to be forced to watch all day for him, and not to see him, —to hear of him going elsewhere, meeting other people, occupying himself about other things, and leaving *her*—! She never thought any of this when he was with her, but she often thought it all when she was alone,—not *believing* even then that it would be so, but yet seeing the possibility of it like a vague chill shadow before her, that it wanted the warmth and blessedness of his living presence to chase away.

Once or twice she tried to make him tell her about that life of his in Paris; but I do not

know that the few details she gathered from him ever cheered her much.

"Why are you so curious to know what I do? I am an idle man," he would say to her.

"But I don't know what you mean by being idle," she answered him once. "You don't mean that you sit at home all day and do nothing?"

"No—I am very little at home."

"Then you know a great many people, I suppose?"

"Yes—I know a good many people."

"And you go to their houses?"

"I go to some of their houses."

"And do good-natured things for them—as you do for us?"

"No, I don't think much of that goes on. I am not especially fond of doing good-natured things."

"Then what a martyrdom you must be suffering here!"

But she said this with a little happy laugh.

"I look as if I were—do I not?"

"You may be suffering in secret, you know. Then, if you don't do good-natured things, what is it you do?"

"Read the papers, and play at billiards, and smoke,—and abuse my friends."

"But why do you do that?"

"What else would you have me do?"

"I don't believe that you spend your time in abusing people,—and you can't spend more than a very small part of it in playing billiards."

"Why not? Did you never hear of people who spent much time in playing billiards?"

"Yes,—but *you* don't?"—a little anxiously.

"I don't know that I do anything that is much better."

"I think you are only saying that to puzzle me. You don't mean me to believe it?"

"I am afraid that I don't want you to believe anything that would make you think ill of me."

"But I am not likely to think ill of you."

"Not even if you believed I played billiards?"

"I don't think that playing billiards is wrong."

"In moderation?"

"Of course,—in moderation."

"Then, upon that point we think alike. Upon many points, you know, we *don't* think alike."

“No.”

But she turned her face to him as she said “No,” and their eyes met with a quick, sudden, happy smile. What though they often did not think alike? They were not afraid of differing from one another in these days.

And yet sometimes—for, though she had given her heart to Philip Romney, she never resigned her judgment to his keeping, now or hereafter—words that he spoke used to grieve her, and thoughts about him made her often anxious and sad at heart. Did he indeed live this life that he professed to do in Paris,—so utterly idle and aimless a life?—he who was capable of all good things! She used to ponder over it, and find excuses for him, and half disbelieve his story, and yet remain troubled by it.

"Do you really *like* living altogether in Paris?" she asked him one day.

"Yes, why shouldn't I? Everybody likes living in Paris who has tried it long enough," he answered.

"But it hardly seems natural, when you are not obliged. Why should you not rather live in England?"

"What! in an English country town?"

"No, you need not live in a country town; you might live in London."

"And why might I not just as well live in Paris?"

"Because I think you would find more to do in London."

"But what makes you think that I *want* more to do?"

"I don't know that you want it; but"—with a moment's hesitation—"I think if you had it you would be happier."

"Don't I give you the impression, then, of being happy as I am?"

"You do sometimes—not always."

"Don't I seem happy now?"

"You are laughing at me, but I don't know that that makes you look very happy."

"I am always happy when I am here. You ought to know that."

"I am very glad to know it. But still, you see, that has nothing to do with what I said."

"You said that I should be happier in London than in Paris, because you thought in London I should be forced to become respectable, and work for my living?"

"Oh! no! I only said that I thought you would probably find more to do in London. I don't want you to work for your living if you do not need to do it."

"Miss Treherne,"—abruptly—"do you think I am a rich man?"

"I never thought of you being rich,—but how can I know? You never told me."

"Would you think worse of me than you do already (there are moments now, I know, when you do think hardly enough of me), if I tell you that I never in my life have had a clear income of three hundred a year?"

"Think the worse of you for that!" she said.

"Yes—when you reflect that with such an income I made my choice rather to be idle than to work."

"If you did make such a choice I think you did wrong," she said very quietly, after a moment's silence.

"Of course you do. But suppose I was

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placed in a position where it was difficult for me to help myself?"

"Then, in that case, how could you be blamed?"

She looked up at him quickly, not able to hide her earnest, eager interest.

"You shall judge, if you like, how much excuse there was for me. There was this to begin with—that my father brought me up to no profession."

"But why did he not?"

"He meant, when I was a boy, that I shouldn't need one."

"Then he was rich?"

"Yes, he was rich. He was Sir Edward Romney of Cleverton, and my brother is Sir Edward Romney now."

"And your brother is rich, and yet leaves you to be poor?"

"Yes—why shouldn't he? If our positions were reversed, I should leave him to be poor."

"I don't think you would."

"I have no doubt myself that I should."

"But why *are* you poor if your brother is rich? Did your father leave you nothing?"

"Yes, my father left me five thousand pounds. That was a handsome provision for life, was it not, for a man who had never been taught to work?"

The words were bitter, but he said them lightly, and almost with a laugh.

"But he must have meant once to leave you more. Had you made him angry?" she said quickly.

"I had made him pay my college debts," he answered.

And then there was a sudden pause.

For a moment she had looked at him gravely; but then she turned away, without asking any further question. He was sitting, as it had now become his habit to sit frequently, in front of her sofa, near enough to her to see every change in her face, and to watch every expression in her eyes. He would sit there sometimes for hours together, and she loved him to do it, and loved unutterably to think that she was beautiful enough in his sight to make that long gazing sweet to him.

He could read her face well enough now, and presently, when she did not speak, he broke the silence.

"You think that I ought to have had no college debts?" he said. "Well, so do I, Miss Treherne. If I had done what I ought

to have done, I should have lived on the allowance my father made me; but do you think that a lad brought up as I had been, with no ideas about money except that it was to flow in on him like water when he wanted it, was likely to begin for the first time to practise economy when he went to Oxford? Do you think it was so entirely inexcusable if he did not do it?"

"No, I do not think it was inexcusable," she said.

"I did get deeply into debt, and my father paid my debts,—and altered his will when he had done it; and then he died, and I was thrown on the world at two-and-twenty with my five thousand pounds."

"It was hard upon you. I don't think you deserved it," she said.

"I don't know whether I deserved it or

not, but I like you to think that I didn't. Women are always merciful. My poor mother would have stood up for me if she had been alive."

"Was she dead, then? Had she died long before?"

"Yes, she had died nearly ten years before. I have often thought since that if she had lived a little longer I should be a different man now, and a better one than I am."

She said nothing for two or three moments; then—

"And what did you do?—will you tell me?" she said.

"After my father's death? I shook the dust of England off my feet, and came here—to France."

"And you have lived here ever since?"

"I have lived in one part or other of the

Continent ever since—for twelve years. And they have been pleasant years, too, many of them. Of course a homeless wanderer is not a respectable person—I know that, Miss Treherne; but happiness is compatible sometimes even with a want of respectability—at least, I have found it so.”

“You always speak in a tone as if, because we are English, we must have the most religious horror of whatever is not orthodox and conventional,” she said, a little sadly.

“I don’t mean to speak so—not, at least, to *you*. It would be a terrible thing for me if you had no toleration for anything that was unorthodox. If you had not shown me that the reverse of that was true, do you think I should have told you what I have been telling you now?”

He was looking in her face, and as he

spoke to her he could read all that was in her heart—all her love for him, and her sympathy with him. But she only said, very quietly, "I am glad that you have told it to me."

And then neither of them spoke again.

At this time a fortnight had passed since the day of Mildred's accident, and for nearly half that time it had been, if not quite an acknowledged, yet, at least, a tacitly understood thing that Mr. Romney would accommodate his movements to the Trehermes'. At the end of the first week he had told Mildred that he might then leave Amiens if he pleased, but that he had no wish to leave it; and after that they had taken it for granted—as he had meant them to do—that he would only go when they did.

"My time is pretty much my own. Whe-

ther I am in Paris or here matters very little to any one," he had merely said carelessly one day.

At the beginning of the third week Mildred was allowed to use her foot a little, and, with the help sometimes of her father's arm, sometimes of Philip's, she took daily walks round the pretty hotel garden, or sat on one of the benches in the sun. And then presently, growing stronger and more adventurous, she went beyond the garden, and made them take her once more into the town. She liked the quaint, old, unfamiliar streets. "How foreign it all looks!" she would exclaim with a childish delight that often made Philip laugh.

The last day before they left Amiens she and Mr. Romney went together to the Cathedral, and, passing by the place where they

had seen each other first, they lingered at it, and half in jest, to hide any deeper feeling, began to talk of that first meeting.

"Here is the exact spot where you were sitting," he said, "looking so helpless, as I came up. You were very much ashamed of yourself that day."

"Of course I was. Suppose it had been the other way," she answered, "and *I* had come and seen *you* sitting here, do you think you would have liked it?"

"No—I am certain I shouldn't. I think you submitted to the ignominy of your position on the whole very well. But it *was* ignominious, you know."

"Yes—I know. You can't think how indignant I felt with you when I saw you coming."

"You looked indignant—as if you thought

you ought to have had the whole street to yourself."

"And I was so nearly crying with pain, too."

"Yes, you were so white that I was afraid you were going to faint. But you *didn't* cry."

"Because I was ashamed to do it before you. And that was another thing that made me angry, too. I *wanted* so to cry."

"It wouldn't have made you a bit better."

"I don't know that. I think it would have comforted me."

"Only your pride wouldn't let you do it? Well, it was hard to be forced to be heroic against your will! But you wouldn't mind crying before me now?"

"I am not sure of that. I think I should like to try and be brave if I could."

"What! just out of pure vanity? Oh! that would be very foolish; for, you know, you couldn't take me in now. I know exactly how much of a heroine you are."

"Are you sure you do?" she said. And then she laughed, for she was too happy in her certainty of what he thought of her to care about what he said in jest.

They went on to the Cathedral, and lingered in it—it was afternoon—until the sun went down. That sun's low red rays as he was setting lit up the west stained windows till they looked like flaming jewels, and, as she stood beneath them, threw gules of gorgeous colour over her white dress.

"How beautiful it is! I wonder if I could ever get tired of it all, and come to care nothing for it!" Mildred said.

But *he* was looking at the church less than at her.

"Look at these crimsons and purples stretching to your feet," he said. "And there is a gold light on your hair. Don't move and make it leave you. Look, you are all bathed in colour. You are like Keats's Madeleine—


'—a splendid angel, newly drest,
Save wings, for heaven.'

—But I don't like you to look like an angel yet. Come away," he said quickly, a moment after.

"I don't think I run much risk of looking very angelic, standing here in my bonnet and shawl," she said, and laughed.

"Angels may wear bonnets and shawls, for anything I know. The only security I feel lies in the absence of wings."

Mr. Treherne came to join them, and presently they walked home together. It was their last walk in Amiens, for they were to start for Paris in the morning. Mildred was so far recovered that the journey would do her no harm now, M. Fernier said, though Mademoiselle must still be very careful of fatiguing herself for some little time to come. The good French doctor had been very kind to Mildred, and they had come to be on very friendly terms together. He used to come and amuse her with all the gossip of the place, and would sit beside her sofa for an hour together, telling her stories in his pleasant, cheery French voice. He, on his part, had been charmed with her. "The name of Mademoiselle will remain for ever engraven on my heart," he told her, when he came for the last time to wish her good-bye.



"Considering all things, we have certainly got through these weeks here wonderfully," Mr. Treherne said on the last night. Philip had as usual been spending the evening with them, and they were speaking before he went away of their arrangements for the morning.

"I think we have: at any rate, it has been a very pleasant time to *me*," Mr. Romney said frankly.

But Mildred did not speak, though her heart was full. She was clinging to these last hours with a passionate reluctance to let them pass from her and fade away for ever. Once, when during the evening for a few moments she and Philip had been left alone, he had gone up close to her sofa, and leaning over the head of it—

"Whatever may come after this," he said abruptly, "I want to say to you now that I

shall remember these three weeks for ever and ever."

As he spoke he had laid his hand on hers. A moment after he lifted it up, and stooped his face and kissed it.

CHAPTER V.

IT seemed to Mildred when they left Amiens that the hour in which they went away was one of the hours of sharpest pain that she had ever known. The roots of her heart seemed to be clinging to the stones of the old city; she could not speak as she turned away for the last time from the room in which she had been so unutterably happy. The little sunny, quiet French room that she saw for the last time through a mist of tears.

When they reached their new rooms at Meurice's in the afternoon everything appeared

strange and cold to her. None of the repose of the quaint old Amiens hotel was there. Their windows now looked down upon the Rue de Rivoli, and the ceaseless sound of carriage-wheels was in her ears.

To add, too, to the unfamiliarity and chillness of it all, their first evening in Paris was spent alone.

Mr. Romney came to their hotel with them, and stayed till he had seen them take possession of their rooms; but then he left them, and they saw no more of him that night.


"I must be with you when you take your first look at the streets," he said to Mildred; "but of course you will do nothing this evening?"

"No, I suppose not," she said.

And then he had bidden them good-bye, and had gone away. "He will come back to-

morrow," she said to herself when he was gone ; but how long and weary the hours seemed presently without him !—how the light had gone out from everything !—what an utter blank his absence made ! Even her father, in his own way, felt it.

"I think the best thing we can do is to go very early to bed," he said to Mildred an hour or more before he would have thought of making such a proposition on any other night ; and Mildred answered "Yes" gladly, and went to her room weary and chill. She was almost frightened at herself to feel how utterly the life had gone out of her. "Oh, I wish we were back at Amiens—my dear old Amiens !" she cried to herself as she laid her head down upon her pillow. All night she had been wondering, with a restless jealous wonderment, where Philip was.



It was like the return of the sun to her world when he came back to her again next morning. Bitter doubts in his absence had been stealing over her,—those torturing doubts (which always had their root in humility and distrust of her own power to satisfy him) that had come before,—though never before so keenly—of what she should be to him here, in this new place; but she did not know where they vanished when she saw his face again.

“Are you going to be strong enough to be out to-day?” he asked her. “I want so to have you out. I wish you had had a sight of Paris last night. It was so brilliantly clear that if your windows had not been all dark when I passed them soon after ten o’clock I should almost have been tempted to run up and try if you would not have come

as far as the Tuileries for ten minutes."

"Did you pass here last night?" she asked quickly; and she longed to ask, "What had you been doing? Where were you going to?" But she was ashamed.

"Yes, I passed twice," he answered; "but the second time was at one o'clock in the morning, and I did not expect to see your lights burning then."

"No, we had been asleep then for a long time."

"So I hoped. I hoped that you were sleeping all your weariness away."

She was still not strong, but yet she was eager to begin her Paris sight-seeing; and so they began it to-day, and continued it day after day,—though in moderation; for—"We can take time and do things deliberately," Mr. Treherne said sensibly.

They did their pleasuring, therefore, easily, —it generally falling to Philip Romney to portion out each day's work to them, and generally also to help them to accomplish it.


"Of course we can't expect you to go everywhere with us," Mr. Treherne would sometimes say to him, half deprecatingly; "but I needn't tell you that whenever you *can* accompany us—understanding the language and knowing everything so thoroughly as you do—it's the greatest possible assistance. Only, if we trespass too much upon you, you must tell us frankly. I do hope you will do that."

"You may be sure I shall do it," Philip would answer with perfect honesty. "But, as the pleasure is mine at the least as much as it is yours, I am not very likely to have any occasion to do it."

He always spoke openly of his liking to be

with them,—so openly indeed that possibly this very frankness helped to lull Mr. Treherne's suspicions, and blind him to what was going on. Blind, at any rate, he unquestionably was. Mr. Romney was with them morning, noon, and night: he was often with Mildred alone for long hours together; and yet the thought of him and Mildred becoming lovers never crossed his unsuspecting mind. He thought that they got on excellently together—that Philip had a fatherly or perhaps elder brotherly regard for her—that he was a person with whom he could confidently trust her; and that was the length to which his insight went. If anybody had told him that they were passionately in love with one another, living and breathing only in each other's sight, he would have felt as if the earth had given way below his feet.


But, suspecting nothing, he let Philip spend his time beside her to his heart's content; and not only *let* him do it, but was even eminently grateful to him for doing it; for he wanted Mildred to be amused and happy, but yet he was so unaccustomed to amuse her himself that he was at a loss how to do it, and was ready to be grateful to anybody who would take the task off his hands. Mildred, for example, cared passionately for pictures: Mr. Treherne did not care for pictures except in a very moderate way; so he would leave her in the Louvre with Mr. Romney, and would himself go perhaps and spend his morning in the Bibliothèque Impériale. Mildred, again, loved riding; so they hired horses, but, on more than half the days she rode, it was Philip and not Mr. Treherne who took his place beside her.



In permitting this constant association of Mr. Romney with his daughter, he *was* undoubtedly conscious that he was doing something which he never would have done at home; but then it was a mere question of etiquette, he thought, and with respect to etiquette most people allowed themselves a good deal of latitude when they went abroad. The case would have been different, of course, if Mr. Romney had been a younger man. Whenever he thought of the matter at all he thought this; but he *did* not think of it very often, for Philip had art and tact enough to give an appearance of naturalness and unpremeditation to his constant attendance on Mildred that might easily have blinded a more suspicious man than Mr. Treherne. It almost seemed, indeed, as if it were less Philip than Mr. Treherne himself who drew his daughter

and her lover together, so passive in the matter did Mr. Romney often appear, so little anxious to press his company upon either of them.

In point of fact the actual management of everything they did—or at any rate of everything that Mildred did—was soon almost wholly in his hands, but yet no man could have been, to all appearance, less self-assumptive than he was. Mildred understood perhaps how all their plans were made by him, and saw with a happy heart how quietly he always contrived that in the carrying out of them she and he should be together: but to Mr. Treherne nothing of this was visible; on the contrary, it often seemed to him the merest accident that associated his daughter with Mr. Romney, and sometimes in the innocence of his heart he would gravely apologise



to Philip for the chance which seemed to throw her on his hands.

The Trehernes, as Mildred had once told Philip, had brought only one letter of introduction with them to Paris, and the family to whom it was addressed, they found on presenting it, were on the point of leaving town. They saw them once or twice, and then they went away.

"I am not sorry on the whole, for I can't say that they seem to me very interesting people," Mr. Treherne said at their departure; "and really I don't see much use, for so short a time, in our making acquaintances. It is not as if we wanted to go into French society."

"Should you *care* to go into French society?" Philip asked him.

"Well, if I had been staying in the place

I suppose I should," he answered;—"though I don't know—I don't know," he added next moment quickly, his shy reserve starting up to check the momentary impulse towards sociability. "It would be no good, you see, unless I could speak the language more easily. No—upon the whole I think we are best left to ourselves. When one goes anywhere for a short time it seems to me, I confess, rather a tax to have to go about paying visits."

"Yes—I daresay it is,—though I could easily introduce you to some Frenchmen who talk English, if you thought you would like it," Philip carelessly said.

"No, no—I shouldn't care about it,—I would rather not," Mr. Treherne answered quickly, and then the subject dropped; and Mr. Romney did not repeat his offer.


They learnt, upon the whole, very little about his friends while they were in Paris. He often when he was out with them exchanged salutations with some passers-by, and once or twice, when she was not with him, Mildred saw him in the streets in company with other men; but if she afterwards asked him any questions concerning them he never seemed to care to answer her at any length. Paris was empty, and almost every one he knew, he told her, was away. Sometimes, meeting an acquaintance when Mr. Treherne was with him, he would introduce the two men to one another; but, as these acquaintances were mostly Frenchmen, they and Mr. Treherne did not in general converse together at any length.

They stayed in Paris for six weeks,—bright weeks, almost every day of which brought

some special happiness to Mildred, in addition to her one great abiding happiness,—the knowledge with which she opened her eyes each morning that an hour or two would bring Philip Romney to her side. And yet, in spite of this, all her gladness was strangely mingled and saddened now with other feelings. She no longer felt the pure and peaceful gladness of Amiens. With the end of those calm days there the calm in her own heart seemed to have ended too. Here in Paris she was feverishly happy, but it was a happiness that had no longer any rest in it, for the more she saw of her lover the more her heart was torn with distress and pain. He was so noble in a thousand ways, and yet—and yet—! One after another his faults used to start out before her,—her very love for him, she often thought, making her see

them the more clearly ; his recklessness, his want of principle, his irreligiousness, his careless extravagance—day after day brought instances of all these before her, and wrung her heart with a pain that seemed always growing sharper.

For she could not give him up: she would sooner have given up her life. As to that she never hesitated for one second. It was no question of prudence or expediency with her,—of what would or would not be best for *herself*: she clung to him utterly regardless of the price that she might have to pay for it. Nor was it, I think, to be wondered at that she did this,—she being the girl she was,—passionate, high-natured, full of life and fire, and he being such a man as she had found him. For he had awakened her soul within her: he had changed her from a half developed girl into a deep-hearted woman.



When he came to her she had known little, and she drank in knowledge, and, with knowledge, new life from his lips. Full of faults as he was, he could teach her, and he did teach her, noble things. He opened the world of Art to her, and quickened her vague yearning towards it into an intelligent and eager love; he talked to her of past ages; he told her the great old classic stories, and kindled that grand Greek mythology for her with a beauty and meaning of which she had never dreamed. For, whatever he wanted, Philip Romney wanted neither heart nor head. There was even in him, though he laughed at it, and would often deny it, an inner current of enthusiasm that leapt up to the surface more than now and then,—and restored to him, perhaps, in the moments when he yielded to it, much of the


noble nature that had been his once, before his vices and his wild life had marred and ruined it. Perhaps, indeed, that better nature came back to him when he talked to Mildred oftener than it had returned to him before through many a past year.

“Do you think that we ever have guardian angels in the flesh?” he said to her one day;—“for, if we do, I think you must have been appointed to be mine.”

“I am afraid that guardian angels in the flesh would be very weak creatures,” she replied. “They would need to be something more than mortal to do their work well.”

“To deal with such hardened sinners as I am, you mean? Well, I suppose they would in a general way. But I think *you* would have strength enough, and goodness and purity enough for me.”

And he did not merely say this, but, in a half fantastic way, he even loved to think it; for, far though until now his previous life had led him from the knowledge of what was highest in women, the purity of nature that he found in Mildred had become before this unutterably and mysteriously dear to him. Mysteriously,—because hitherto a woman who stood upon her purity had been a saint in his estimation, and he laughed at saints, and innocence he associated with simplicity, and simplicity with pinafores and spoon food. If Mildred had been merely innocent and beautiful she would in all likelihood have escaped the curse or the blessing (whichever it should be called) of Philip Romney's love. But she was more than only pure. The large brain, the high heart, the whole strength of intellect and passion in her,—it was all these together



that made her what she was to him. He loved her purity because it was a living part of her,—as he loved the warm hand that he touched, or the dark eyes that he looked into.

She loved him passionately, but she did not love him better than he did her. His past life lost its lawless charm in those long hours that he spent with her, and out of this bright and happy present would rise dreams of future better years. “There is *nothing* that a woman may not do with a man who loves her,” he said to Mildred once, with a meaning and a tone in his voice that thrilled her heart.

But yet, though they were so nearly lovers, week passed after week, and he never spoke the final words that would have made, and that he must well have known would have made, her wholly belong to him. He came

and went ; he stayed with her for hours, and told her in everything but words that she was dearer to him than the air he breathed ; but still there stood between them day after day the little "screen, so slight, so sure." She never knew till afterwards why he let it stand so long : in her innocence and ignorance she never guessed then how much he had to fear the future.

CHAPTER VI.

“WHEN you have your time so much at your own disposal why should you not give up Paris for this winter, and come to Italy with us? I wish you would,” Mr. Treherne said to Philip one day.

As he spoke the colour came—a whole rush of crimson—to Mildred’s face. She gave one quick look up, which Mr. Romney seemed to have expected, for their eyes met, and then bent her head over her work, and never spoke a word. But her hands trembled as she tried to go on sewing; and the blood

perhaps was moving in his own veins a little quicker than usual, though when he spoke his voice was quiet and cool enough.

"If I could manage it there is certainly nothing I should like better," he said.

"Well, why shouldn't you manage it? You seem to be pretty much your own master?"

"Pretty much, but not entirely. A man with a small income, you know, has to consult his purse as well as his inclinations."

"Ah—I didn't think of that. Of course, if you would rather not incur the expense——"

"I will incur the expense with all my heart if I find it possible to do it," Mr. Romney answered with a laugh. "But you must give me a day or two to find out if it is possible."

"Oh—take as much time as you like. We shan't be moving for a couple of weeks yet,

you know," Mr. Treherne said. And then the matter dropped.

But the next day, when they happened to be alone together, Philip said abruptly to Mildred, "Tell me what I am to do about this going to Italy."

They had been standing for a few minutes at one of the windows that looked down into the Rue de Rivoli, watching the people in the street and talking lightly and gaily, when all at once he turned to her with this sudden question.

As it had done yesterday the colour came again into her face.

"How can I tell you what you are to do?" she said quickly.

"You can tell me what you would like me to do. You know you did not say a word yesterday."

"No."

"Then how can I decide whether to go or not?"

"Until I say something?"

She looked up to him with a little laugh, but it was rather a nervous one.

"Yes—until you say something. Do you think I should want to go if you didn't want to have me?"

"But you said yesterday that your doubt was not whether I should want to have you, but whether you could afford the expense."

"It was not likely, was it, that I should have raised the question of whether you would want to have me at that moment? I was content to put forward the least important of my doubts."

"I think it was by far the most important of them."

"Do you?"

"Surely it was?"

"The other is by far the most important to *me*."

"But have you been thinking whether or not you can afford it? Do you think you can?"

"I don't know. I shall find that out when you have answered my other question."

But she stood silent, and did not answer it. He looked at her for a moment or two without speaking.

"If you say nothing I shall conclude that you would rather I did not go," he said at last.

"I would rather that you did nothing unwise in order that you might be able to go." She spoke in a voice that was tremulous in spite of herself. "I am afraid it is true

that you cannot afford it, and, if this is so, it would be best to give it up."

"Then you don't care about it?" he said.

She was silent for a moment.

"You know I care about it."

"How can I know when you won't say so?"

She turned round to him quickly, with a reproachful, half tortured look in her eyes.

"Am I not saying it?"

"You said it grudgingly, and I can't bear you to say it so. The thought of staying longer with you is like life to *me*. I can't bear you to speak as if it hardly mattered to you one way or the other."

"You *know* it matters to *me*." She spoke only half aloud. "You know that I owe everything that has made me happy here to you," she said.

He took her hand, and held it without

speaking in his. As they stood so they did not even look at one another. They merely held each other's hands as two children might have done, standing side by side, and gazing out again into the busy street where the people and the carriages were passing up and down.

After a little while he said in a low passionate voice,

"Do you think I have exacted too much from you in making you say this? You would hardly think it if you knew what it has been to me all these weeks to live beside you!"

"I do not think it. We have been very happy," she answered softly.

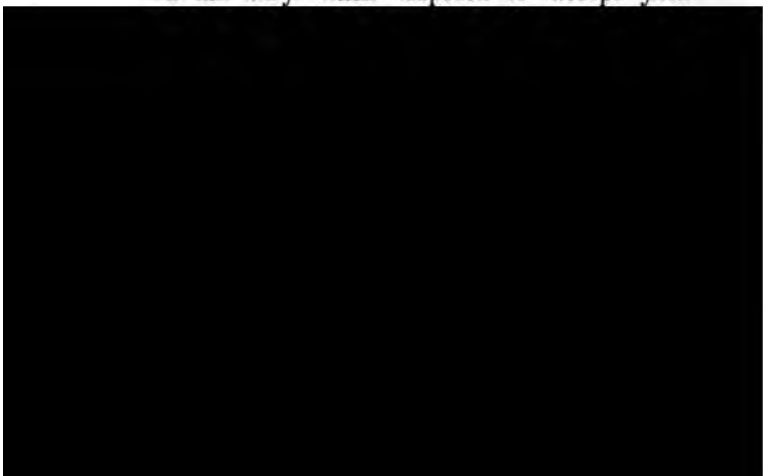
"*One* of us at least has been happy,—God knows!" he said.

In another second or two she took her

hand away from him ; and then, as they still stood side by side, he made some remark again in his ordinary tone,—and they were presently talking once more about the people in the streets.

Three or four days passed after this before anything further was said about his being their companion in their coming journey ; but one morning, when the greater part of a week had gone by, he said at last, rather abruptly, to Mr. Treherne,

“I am very much disposed to accept your



all the difference in the world, you know."

Philip's eyes and Mildred's met, but neither of them spoke to the other. Into her face there came a look of inquiry and half anxiety; in his there was a curious smile—half happy, half defiant. But he went on talking to Mr. Treherne, and said nothing to her.


"I think I might treat myself to two or three months with you. I want to see Italy again, and I should like to see it with you and Miss Treherne. When a strong temptation assails one, don't you think on the whole it is the best thing to yield to it?"

Mr. Treherne laughed.

"It depends a good deal on the nature of the temptation, I imagine," he said. "In this case I think you had better yield to it by all means."

"So I think too."

And then they seemed to consider that the matter was settled, and they fell in a few minutes to talking about routes, and the various places they must see, and so on, Mildred joining in the conversation too after a time, and all of them at last growing very animated over it. For, though she might doubt the prudence of Philip Romney's going with them, yet the difference that the prospect of his going made to her was like the difference between light and darkness. All through these last days—since the thing had been first spoken of—she had known that it would be so: she could scarcely hide even from him now that it was so. Hitherto she had only wanted to remain here where she was, because he who had become her life was here, and all Italy, should she go away, would have been a barren land to her; but now, with the



thought that he would go with them when they went, there came a rush of such unutterable joy to her as she could not subdue or repress. In both of them, indeed, as they sat talking round the table with Mr. Treherne between them, there was a half concealed, great gladness to-night, that rose up to the surface irrepressibly again and again. They could not help it. She had been tortured by vague fears about the future,—by a thousand fears about their parting, and doubts of what was to follow after; and now the knowledge that they were to remain together, at any and all costs, was like the giving to her of a new life, and the joy of it for the moment overwhelmed all other thoughts in her.

But this was hardly so any longer—or at least it was not so wholly—when they met

alone next day. She said to him then (they had been talking for ten minutes of different things, and then she said to him half anxiously)—

“Are you right to decide to come with us? I hardly think you are.”

“Yes, I am quite right,” he answered.

He spoke with the same kind of defiant smile that she had seen upon his lips last night.

“Yes—I am quite right,” he said. “But I knew yesterday that you were going to preach to me,—so now begin and do it.”

He was standing with his back to the window, propping himself against it, and looking down upon her as she sat near him.

“I don’t want to preach to you,” she said. “You know the only thing that I should be likely to say.”

"Yes—I know quite well what you are going to say. I know what it is upon the tip of your tongue to say continually. Do you know"—he was speaking in a half jesting, half reckless tone, with a kind of mocking laughter in his eyes—"do you know I have repented many a time of what I did that day when I told you of my poverty? If I had had wisdom enough to hold my tongue I should have escaped a great deal of condemnation that you have bestowed upon me since."

"That is not true. I have not condemned you."

"You have set me down as a reckless, extravagant fellow, who is probably over head and ears in debt."

"Oh, no, I have not! I should be very sorry to think you were much in debt." And

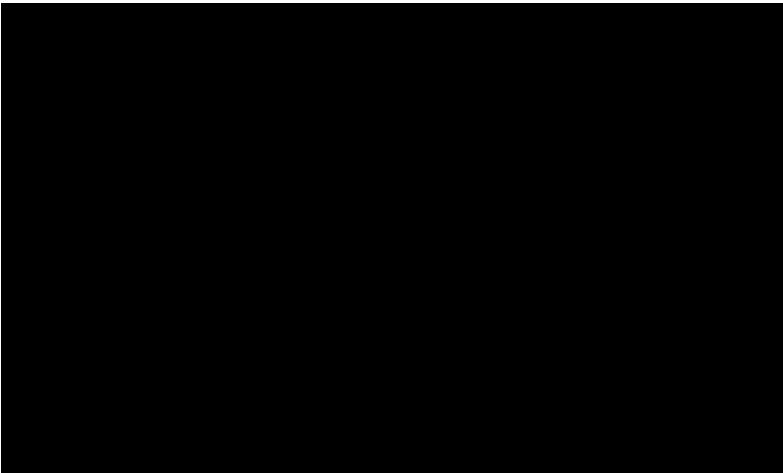
she looked with a more than half earnest anxiety in his face; but she could not read its expression; it was too full of jest and mockery on the surface for her to see what might be beyond.

"I think if you were to be so sorry for me I shouldn't much care."

"Whether you were in debt or not? How can you talk so wildly?"

"Many people who are hopelessly in debt lead very comfortable lives."

"And could *you* do so?"



“Would you?”

There was a little pause, but after a moment or two she had courage to look up to him with a laugh.

“You want me to say ‘No,’ and I won’t say ‘No!’” she answered, half in jest.

“But would you give me up, and turn your back upon me, and pass me in the street as if you had never seen me?”

“Do you think I would?”

“No!”

It was a triumphant “No!”—triumphant enough to make the quick colour come to her face.

“No, I don’t think you would. I don’t think you would give up any body who had been your friend once, let him turn out ever so ill.”

“I don’t know that. I have never been tried yet.”

"You never had a friend who turned out blacker than you thought him to be?"

"No—never."

"Except the one who is talking to you now, you mean? You know *I* am much blacker than you thought I was the day I found you sitting on the pavement at Amiens."

"I didn't know what you were that day. I didn't know whether you were black or white."

"Didn't you? Well, you thought me less black than you do now a day or two afterwards when you first began to talk kindly to me. That is true—is it not?"

"I knew a great deal less about you then."

"Yes—and you gave me credit for being a better man than you do at present?"

She made no answer.

"You can't deny that, you know."

"I don't mean to deny it."

"And yet we have gone on being friends?"

"Yes."

"Though every time you have weighed me in the balance you have found me more and more wanting? Well—is that not just what I said? You don't give your friends up when you find them turning out blacker than you thought them?"

She made no answer, and they were both silent for several moments: then—

"I can't be a hypocrite before you. You don't wish me to be one, do you?" he said abruptly.

"No—you know I do not," she answered.

"It seems to me sometimes,"—he had suddenly changed his manner, and thrown aside the more than half jesting tone in which he had been speaking until now—"it seems to

me sometimes as if my only salvation lay in being honest before *you*. You don't know what good you have done to me already. You don't know—bad enough as I seem to you now—how much better a man you have made me than I was two months ago. If you knew what you could do with me—how it lies in your power to make of me whatever you choose—I think you wouldn't grudge what you have given me—I think that you would give me even more than you have done yet. God bless you!" he said. "I often think that you have come to me to be my good angel!"

With the last words he turned his face quickly to the window, and stood so for several minutes without speaking. Then suddenly looking round again—

"But you needn't think me worse than I

am. I am going to manage this journey to Italy without going into debt for it," he said abruptly, with a light laugh.

"Are you really? I am very glad!" she said.

"Glad that I am going with you, do you mean?—or only glad because I am not going to get into the clutches of the Jews?"

"You know very well that I am glad you are going with us."

"I am not sure that I know it. At any rate, whether I know it or not, I like to hear you say it again. When you say it, I want nothing else to make me happy."

She rose up with a little laugh, and put her work away.

"Here is twelve o'clock, and Papa told us he would be ready to go out by twelve," she said. "I must go and put my bonnet on."

But when she had left him, as she went away to her own room, she said his last words over to herself, gladly and softly. He wanted nothing more to make him happy! What more did either of them want than this assurance and confidence that they were content to be together? Were they not both supremely happy in knowing this?—happy with a perfect happiness?

Once more I say that I do not want either to justify Mildred Treherne or even to excuse her. Those who read her story must decide for themselves whether she was right or wrong. She had not known what Philip Romney was when she began to care for him first, but her ignorance of—at any rate much of—his real character had lasted only for a little while, and then she went on loving him with her eyes open. Probably most people

will say that she ought not to have done so. And perhaps she ought not. Perhaps she deserved little pity in all that her love for him brought upon her afterwards. But at least, if she deserved little, she asked for none. "Do you think that I did not count the cost long ago?" she said to some one once, in the proud voice that through year after year never stooped to a tone or a syllable of complaint.

And, right or wrong, she had undoubtedly this to say for herself; for she had not given her heart and her whole life to Philip Romney in simple headstrong infatuation and recklessness. Possibly she had done it possessed by another feeling as wild and foolish, but at least it was a feeling that was higher than any mere impetuous impulse of self-gratification. She clung to him with the passionate

hope that she might reclaim and save him. A chimerical hope, perhaps, for any woman to pay such a price for as Mildred paid; but it was her own concern. As she herself said, she counted the cost.

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CHAPTER VII.

THEY went to Italy by Marseilles and Genoa, and it was on a bright and still November morning that Mildred had her first sight of that land that she had dreamt of all her life. She stood on deck with Philip Romney as they steamed into the harbour, her eyes beaming with hope, her heart big with happy emotions. Across those blue, clear waters, a sunlit amphitheatre of palaces and gardens, the marble city lay—this first city of her dreams,—Genoa la Superba—like a fair bright vision. She looked—and looked at it. Her hand was within his arm; his eyes and here

were both looking at the same sight. It was an hour that no after one could ever efface—one of the supreme hours of life.

They had been talking a little at intervals, he pointing out to her as they came in sight one feature after another of that noble landscape with its crown of hills; but it was a scene to look at and live on rather than to talk about. At least it was this to *her*. *His* feelings, probably, were less exalted, for he had seen Italy and Genoa many times before, and had half forgotten the emotions that the first sight of them might once have given him; and yet even to him it was something,—perhaps it was much—to stand, as he stood now, and look upon it all beside her.

“I can hardly believe that it is real. It seems to me like some beautiful vision in a dream,” she said to him once as they glided

softly on. "Only, if it *is* a dream, I wish it would last for ever!" she said suddenly.

"Are you so happy, then?" he asked her, and smiled a little, as people smile half tenderly sometimes at a childish speech.

"Yes—I am happy," she answered. "I am so happy that I can hardly speak of it."

"Simply because you have got your first sight of Italy?" he asked her.

But she did not answer this.

"Let us take things deliberately, whatever we do," Mr. Treherne had said earnestly before they set out: and on this point they were all happily agreed. Mildred, indeed, would have been content to linger anywhere: to her the very air had a fascination in it.

"I have got what I have wanted all my life," she said on one of the first days, when everything was still new to her.

"People sometimes get what they have wanted all their lives, and find out at last that they don't care much for it," Philip replied.


"But *I* have not found out that: I have found out rather the very reverse of it," she answered.

They were cold words. She recalled them afterwards with a kind of vague regret; and yet how could she have said the whole truth to him, or have told him how it was his presence that was making the earth like heaven to her? The old dreams—yearnings and desires of her girlhood that had seemed so warm and eager once—had all grown colourless and lifeless now before this great reality—this one unlooked-for, highest blessing. She had got what she had wanted all her life, she said: and she had got, beyond that, something that bathed all the world for her in light that

was more splendid than all splendour of Italian or any other earthly sun-light.


Her life in Italy was only, on the surface, the same life that other travellers lead there. She merely saw the same sights that other people see,—the great cities with their palaces and ruins,—their churches and pictures and statues,—the mountains and plains, and the blue Italian skies over all, that ten thousand times ten thousand other eyes than hers have looked upon; only *her* eyes saw them through a golden medium that glorified and transfigured them all. It was not in fact the real Italy during three months that she saw at all, but another land—that many search for, and that a few find, and that they who gain call Paradise.

They went from place to place slowly, travelling always by easy stages, pausing



wherever they cared to pause. From Genoa they went to Milan, from Milan they went to Verona, from Verona to Venice. And it was at Venice one evening, when—having sailed farther and lingered longer than they had meant to do—the night closed in on them before their gondola had brought them home, that, sitting in the half-darkness by Mildred's side, Philip at last asked her to be his wife.

They had gone out as far as to Murano, and had stayed watching the sun set over the sea, till the crimson and scarlet in the sky



could have let no one but her lover speak, and a hundred times he had sought her eyes with a look in his own that could only have one meaning. But to-night for the first time he said to her in simple passionate words—

“You are all the world to me!—all that I want on earth!”

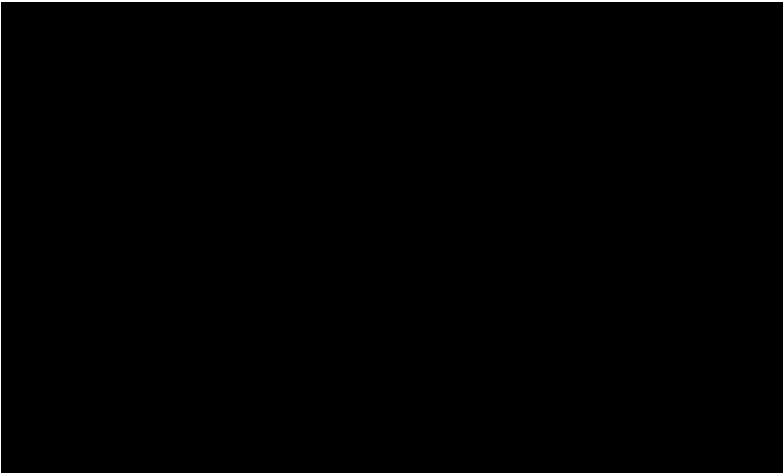
She had been sitting with her hand in his (for he had taken it),—with the quiet evening round them, and no sound breaking the silence except the slight fresh ripple of the water as their gondola shot through it. Almost abruptly he said this to her; and then the next moment he took her in his arms,—and the girl had entered heaven.

That night, after they had reached home and he had left her, she felt as if she had passed through some divine baptism by which she had entered into a new life. She could

not sleep. In the darkness she saw his face, and felt his kisses, and heard the sound of his passionate words again. Her love!—her love! Through the long hours she lay stretching out her arms to him—pouring out wild words of blessing on him—thanking God for him.

He said to her next day (the first night they had had no time to talk to one another, but when they were together next morning he said to her)—

“Have you thought well of what you have



"Do you know what you are to me? Do you know all I want from you? I want your love—I want your words—I want your kisses!" he cried.

"Have I not given you my love?" she said. And then she put her arms about his neck. Was he less to her than she to him? She broke into an irrepressible sob of gladness. "Oh, you have blessed me so! You have made my life so dear to me!" she said.


And, whatever he might be—good or bad—he *had* done this; for her love for him was already an ennobling love, making her braver, stronger, deeper-hearted than she was before she knew him. Whatever his sins were, this was true: he had put another than her old life into her, and lifted her into a larger and a higher world.

It was no part of his plan to tell their secret at once to Mr. Treherne.

"Why should you say anything to him?" he answered Mildred quickly, as soon as she spoke to him about telling her father of their engagement. "He suspects nothing. Leave him alone. That telling your father is the only thing I dread."

"But he must be told sooner or later," she said.

"Then let him be told later," he replied. "You are putting on a grave face, Mildred,—but suppose we told him now, what would happen next, do you think? Suppose he saw me at this moment,—sitting here with my arm about you—what do you think he would do? If you don't know I will tell you: his first impulse would be to kick me down stairs."



"Oh, no!" she cried quickly,—but he only laughed with rather a hard laugh.

"If you don't believe that," he said, "you know very little of the world (and you do know little of it, my pure heart,—I thank God!) But do you think that *I* at any rate don't understand the difference there is between us—simply the outward difference, leaving all the rest alone?"

"You mean that you are poor and we are rich?" she said sadly.

"I mean that, and a good deal more than that. Think what my life has been, Mildred, and compare it with your father's and yours! Think of your decorous English home, and of what kind of shelter it has given you, and then contrast *my* lot in the world with that. Do you know so little of your father as to imagine that he would give his only daughter

willingly to such a man as I am? No!—by God's help," he cried, "you shall be my wife, but I shall never get you till I have had a struggle for it!"

He failed to convince her that he was right, but yet (for the girl's love seemed to her something so sacred that all her instinct made her shrink from confessing it to any one except her lover) she ended by yielding to him; and the days continued to pass silently and peacefully on over Mr. Treherne's unsuspecting head.


They stayed in Venice till almost the end of the year: then they went by Florence to Rome. It was the middle of January when they reached Rome, and they proposed to stay there for a month or two, and then to begin their journey back to England.

"We shall have done very well, I think,

if we get home some time in the course of March," Mr. Treherne said. "That will give us just our six months of it: and it will have been a six months very well spent," he added complacently, in happy unconsciousness as yet of the chief way in which his daughter had been spending it.

He made this speech one day in the middle of their stay at Florence, when he was in a very placid and contented humour; for he liked Florence more thoroughly than any of the towns they had yet visited, and was moreover exceedingly well-satisfied to have escaped from Venice, which was a singularly damp and unpleasant place, he always said,—interesting, no doubt, on account of its historical associations, but comfortless and dreary, and, as far as living in it went, peculiarly unsuited to an Englishman. With Mildred's

enthusiasm over it (for it had filled her with love even before that crowning happiness had come to her in it) he had had no sympathy at all. To her—from the first moment when she had seen it, with the shallow sea lying spread out around it like a sea of gold, and its shadowy towers and pinnacles rising from the waters like the towers and pinnacles of an enchanted city—it had been a thing to dream of. But her father had laughed at her admiration and could not understand it. Had he and she been there alone she would have been allowed to see little enough of Venice,—little even of its modern magnificence, and nothing of the perishing remains of its old glory—the fading beauty of its ruined palaces and mouldering walls. These were things not to Mr. Treherne's taste at all. But Philip cared for them, and Mildred had had no keener




pleasure than to visit them with him, and to see them with his eyes. Nor, since they interested her, had Mr. Treherne been unwilling that she should see them under such efficient guardianship. If Mr. Romney was content to attend on Mildred he had no objection to it; all he objected to was that he should be asked to thrust his own unwilling head into damp nooks and corners,—sailing about, with his delicate chest, in gondolas at Christmas time, and standing contemplating rotting buildings, about which the only feeling *he* had was that the sooner they rotted completely and got swept away the better.

“I don’t know why I should do it,” he said plaintively once to Mr. Romney.

“I see no reason whatever why you should,” Philip replied to him with perfect gravity; and poor Mr. Treherne believed the response to be

a very kind and good-natured one, and proceeded—as he did also on other occasions—to thank him cordially for devoting so much time to Mildred. “For it is a great thing to me to have some one with whom I can trust her so well,” he would say to him, with an unsuspecting sincerity that, more than once, little as he was troubled by over-scrupulousness, made Philip rather wince.

Yet, had any one questioned Mr. Treherne as to how it was that he knew he could trust Mr. Romney so completely he would have been rather puzzled for a conclusive answer, and would perhaps have found, when he came to consider the matter, that he had no reason whatever for trusting him any more than other men, but rather in some respects less reason. But the truth was that Philip Romney had all his life had a power of in-



spiring strangers with much such an opinion of himself as it was his intention that they should have: if he desired that they should dislike him they did dislike him; if he desired that they should place confidence in him they did place confidence in him. In another fashion than the apostolic one it was his habit to make himself all things to all men; and to Mr. Treherne he had made himself during these past weeks something that, in their present wandering existence, was very like a necessary of life.

"I sometimes think," Mildred said half-seriously to him one day, "that papa would hardly get on much better without you now than I should. If you were to go away from us we should both have to put ashes on our heads and mourn for you together."

"He must like me better than he does yet


before he will give my wife to me," Mr. Romney answered.

"I think that he would perhaps give you more than you imagine."

"I think that he might give many things to me—but not his daughter."

And whenever Mildred pressed him to let her tell her father of their engagement (for she was ill at ease in keeping it secret from him) he always answered her like this; and perhaps too he was wise, after the wisdom of the children of this world, and was able to judge of what reception Mr. Treherne would give his suit better than Mildred could.

For he was conscious of much that she did not know, and that consciousness was a bitter thorn in the flesh to him even amidst all the happiness of these bright days. She only half understood now, but she understood




altogether presently, why at this time he clung so passionately as he did to the gladness of the passing hours, and refused, with often a fierce impatience, to resign so much as one moment's gratification in the present for the sake of future years. As he had done in all things through his life, so now in his love for Mildred, he lived on what he held within his hand,—the only thing he believed sure,—the thing that he had gained, and that was his now. "Let us eat and drink," was his creed, "for to-morrow we die." That "to-morrow" was looming dimly on him already, haunting him like a dark shadow through these days; the to-morrow that might take her from him who had become the life of his life.

"The only good thing I have ever done in my life has been to love you," he said to

Mildred once, "and sometimes I think that that in the end will prove my deepest curse. It will, if I lose you! When they turned Lucifer and his angels neck and crop out of heaven did it not make devils of them all?"

"Yes—but Lucifer was turned out of his heaven because he was discontented with it. You are not like him," she said.

"And do you think that people are kicked out for nothing but discontent, then? When St. Peter makes a mistake (as he does sometimes) and opens his gates to a black soul instead of a white one, don't you think that the other angels soon find it out, and begin to spit upon him and howl? They haven't found *me* out yet, but I often think, Mildred, that they will do it before long. And if they do—" he had been speaking—as he often did—in half jesting, half bitter mockery, but



he paused now and suddenly finished his sentence in deadly earnest—"if they do, and if they turn me out,—by God, Mildred, I'll take part with Lucifer and his crew!"

She had been forced by this time to grow used to the hearing of wild enough speeches from him, for he was at least no hypocrite before her. If she loved him—this, perhaps already, lost soul—she loved him with her eyes open, and had no one to blame for it but herself.

"And I would try to reach you even then," she said with a light in her face. "I would go to the gates of hell—and beyond the gates—and fetch you back again."

"Would you?" he asked. "Like a new Ceres? But Ceres failed, you know. She didn't make much of *her* visit down there. And yet, I think if you caught me by the

hand and held me fast, Mildred, you might save me even out of the bottomless pit."

"I think I might save you if any woman's love could do it. But, Philip, when you talk like this," she said sadly, "you break my heart."

"And I want to gladden your heart, not to break it.—Mildred, I wonder whether you would have been happier if you had never seen me! I don't mean *now*—I know that at present I make you happy, my darling—but in the long run I wonder if you would be better without me,—if you would be a completer woman, and lead a nobler life?"

"A completer woman without *you*," she answered quickly, "who have made me know what it is to be a woman at all!"

"Have I taught you that? I know I have taught you a few things," he said. "God

forgive me if any of them have been things that you had been better not to know."

"None of them have been such things, Philip. I bless you for everything you have taught me—for everything you have ever done to me!"

"I think you *were* more of a girl—half a child almost—in some things when I saw you first,—and yet how short a time ago it is! If *I* have made you a woman you have sprung into womanhood like a tropic flower. Who gave you that quick, impulsive nature, Mildred? (God bless you for it, my passionate heart!) You never got it from your father."

"I don't know who I got it from. I have a picture of my mother at home, and sometimes I have thought that I was like it—but I may not be."

"I wish your mother was living now. If

she were I would try to make her love me, so that for very love she should give you to my keeping."

"You could make most women love you, I am afraid, and give you what you wanted, Philip."

"What makes you say that? You cannot know it, Mildred."

"No, I do not know it, but I can guess it,—and I think I am right. And, Philip, sometimes"—she suddenly paused and turned and looked him in the face, with a wistful and a half anxious look—"sometimes I wonder if you will love *me* long, or if you will tire of me—as you must have tired of the other women you have cared for. Philip, will you do that? Will you get tired of me some day, and leave me of your own free will?"

“As I have left the other women?” he said. There was a dark look in his face, and his eyes flashed out suddenly with an angry fire. “Who do you mean by the other women? I have never stood with any other as I stand with you. You are the first woman I have ever asked, or ever wished to ask, to marry me.”

“I did not mean to make you tell me that,” she said quickly.

“Do you care to hear it now that I do tell it to you?”

“Do I *care!*” she repeated in a low sudden voice. Then the colour sprang up to her face, and she took his hands and wildly kissed them. “Have I a woman’s nature, and do I not care to know that I am first with you?” she said. She bent forward to him like a child that wanted to be taken to his

bosom, and when he opened his arms to her she threw herself upon his neck. "Oh! Philip—Philip!" she cried.

He had been angry with her for a moment and now he made up to her for that moment's irritation by a flood of passionate words and kisses. Had he been angry with her for the very greatness of her love?—angry with her because she was jealous of those forgotten women who stood so far away? Those women who had possibly loved *him* as she did, she thought; and as he held her in his arms she felt as if she could have wept with pity for them.

Nor was she deceiving herself with any sweet delusion when she believed his word that he loved her first and best, for he told her no falsehood when he said to her that she was the first woman whom (for her own

sake) he had ever wished to marry. He might have loved others, but *she* had done something for him that no one else had ever done: the large, high, generous, noble nature had touched him to the quick, and had stirred hopes and thoughts and longings in him that had lain dormant since the almost forgotten days of his own generous and high-hearted youth.

And her utmost gladness—the joy that to her eclipsed all other joys—was her knowledge of this. He was a better man by her side than by the side of any one else on earth, even though her influence did not work in making him suppress and hide his faults before her, but rather in the very opposite direction of making him vehemently and bitterly confess them.

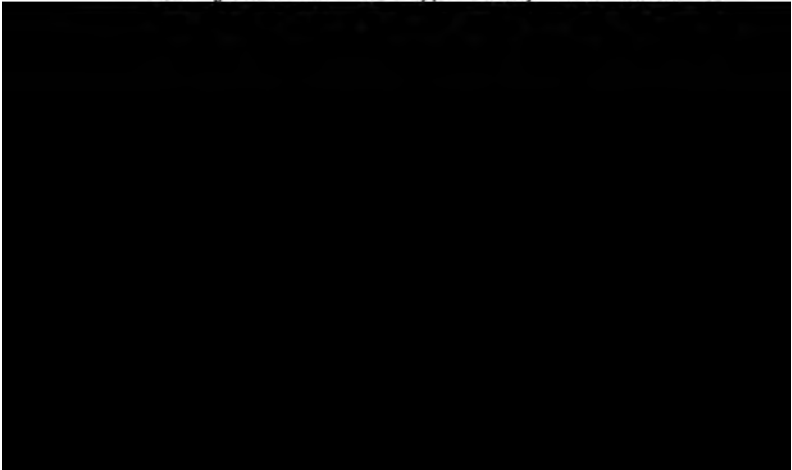
“And yet, when I was as young as you,

I was not very bad, Mildred," he would sometimes say to her. "I think as a boy I had seeds of almost as much good as evil in me. Only the evil seeds got quickened, and the dead ones rotted and died," he said to her one day.

"The good seeds have never died. Do you think that *I* believe they have?" she answered.

"I think you have plenty of cause to believe that they have, whether you do or not.

But you have a large faith, and faith is



you, in all the world, if *I* could not?" she answered. She locked her hands about his arm, and looked into his face with all her soul within her eyes. "My noble Philip!—my noble Philip!" she said.

"You can say this to me now," he answered her after a moment's silence; "and yet it is hard to think—it is bitter to think," he cried almost fiercely, "that a day may come presently when *you* too may cast stones at me!"

"You do not believe that such a day could come! You do not believe it!" she said.

"Could it not?" he asked. "Not if all the world were casting stones? Well, perhaps you wouldn't actually throw them at me; but if you turned away your head while others were throwing them, and passed by on the other side of the way, and left me to stand or fall

as I could alone, that would hit me sharper than the hardest blows the others struck !”

“And do you think that I could turn away from you?—that anything in the wide world would make me do that?” she said.

“Wouldn’t you do it if you thought that I deserved it?—if you were to find out presently that I was even more of a *vaut rien* than you know me to be now?”

“Then you would only want me more, and I would cling the closer to you.”

“Would you, in very truth, I wonder? Ah! Mildred, your love is young, and fresh, and hopeful yet; you don’t know what it would be presently—years after this, perhaps—to feel utterly ashamed of me.”

“No, I do not know that. God keep me from ever knowing it!”

“Would you turn away from me then?”

"Not unless I was utterly changed from everything I am now."

"You would not do it if you were the same that you are now? Would you come up to me before all the world, Mildred, and take my hand, and hold to me?"

"Yes, you know I would; before all the world, and before God in heaven!"

"And God, perhaps, would smite us apart."

"Not because we were true to one another."

"Mildred, does it never strike you that you are perilling your own soul by clinging to me?"

"Never, Philip!"

"You are a bold woman to say that! You may be saving *my* soul by your love, you know, but don't pious people tell you that in the matter of salvation it is your first duty to take care of yourself? It is St. Paul, is it not, who warns you against being un-

equally yoked with unbelievers? Such yoking might save the unbelievers sometimes,—but St. Paul didn't care much about that, I suppose. He only cared for saving the saints."

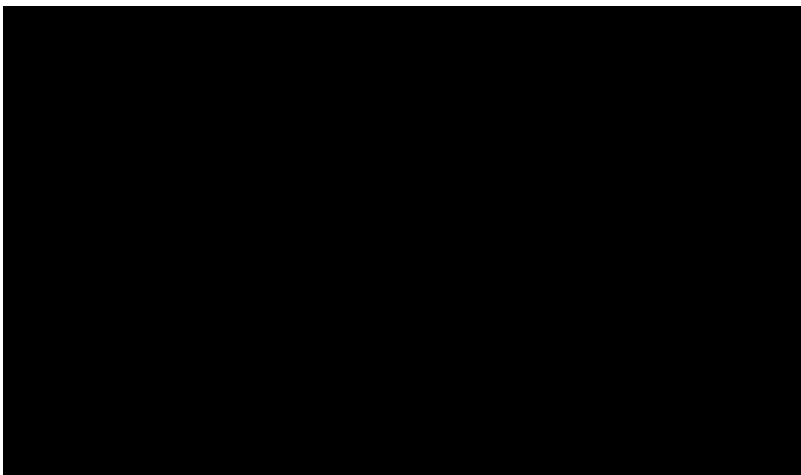
"If you really remembered anything about St. Paul you wouldn't say that, Philip."

"Why? Is it not true of him?"

"No, it is utterly untrue of him."

"Your eyes are beginning to flash, Mildred. I don't want to be unjust to St. Paul, or to any man."

"Do you remember what he said once?"




He took her in his arms without a word. He was not worthy of her—he was never worthy of her from first to last ; but yet, reckless and wild and lawless as he was, there was something noble left in him, and he understood Mildred Treherne, now and hereafter, as many a better man never did.

CHAPTER VIII.

IT was at Rome that the first suspicion struck Mr. Treherne of a possible attachment between his daughter and Mr. Romney; and it was at Rome that the whole story was told to him. The confession was made at last very quietly; but I am afraid it took most of the sunshine for Mr. Treherne out of the remainder of his stay in the Eternal City.

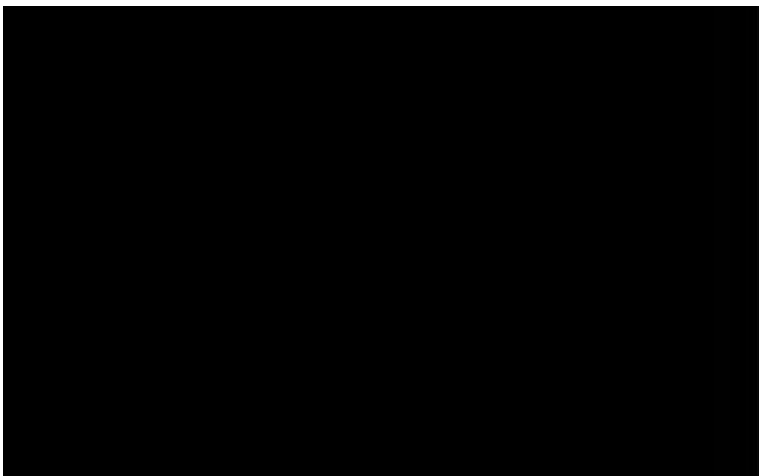
This was how it came about. One morning he happened by accident to see Mr. Romney and Mildred standing together,—not indeed in any attitude that was decidedly lover-like, but yet in one that was familiar enough to be



startling, for he was reading something aloud to her, and she was standing by his side, and looking over the page with him, with one of her hands laid lightly on his shoulder.


Mr. Treherne looked at them, and felt a curious sensation run through him. He had enough refinement in him to make him very fastidious about women's behaviour, and the thought of a daughter of his permitting herself to use such familiarity even towards a man with whom she was on very intimate terms, made the blood tingle in his veins. He did not guess the truth. He only thought that she had forgotten herself, and thrown aside proper womanly reserve, in a way that shocked him. He passed on, however, for he had seen them only through a half-open door, as he was crossing the passage outside, and said nothing.

But all through the day he remained ill at ease, and he showed his vexation by a coldness and reserve to Mildred that she did not understand. It happened to be a day on which Mr. Romney was not much with them, for he had acquaintances in Rome who sometimes claimed his time, and for a good many hours the father and daughter sat alone together. He was disinclined to go out, he said; he had letters to write that would occupy him: so he wrote his letters, and she read all through the evening, and it was only before they part-



sitting brooding over what he had seen her do, and getting more and more angry and excited at the thought of it, till now—though he hardly knew what he meant to say—it seemed to him as if he could not restrain his indignation any more.

“Put down your candle for a moment, Mildred. I want to speak to you. I have been very much put out—I don’t know how it may seem to you,” he began, almost incoherently,—“but I must say that something I saw to-day—the way in which I saw you standing with Mr. Romney this morning before he left the house—you didn’t mean any harm by it, I daresay, but that’s not the question—I can’t help saying it has shocked me exceedingly. How you could permit yourself to use such familiarity towards him I—I—I—cannot understand !”



The blood had rushed up to Mildred's face. She had looked for one moment, scared and bewildered, at her father, and then her eyes sank down. Her heart was beating till she felt sick and faint. She could not tell from anything he was saying what it was that he had seen; she only felt that he must have seen them together at some moment when she had not known that he was near.

When he had finished his speech, there was a moment or two's perfect silence; and then she spoke, trying hard to steady her voice—

“I do not know what you mean, Father,” she said. “You must tell me more plainly.”

“More plainly!” Mr. Treherne's face began to get hot. “I don't know what you mean by more plainly. I saw you standing with him just before he went away. Weren't you standing beside him, and leaning on him?”


Hadn't you got your hand upon his shoulder?"

"Had I?" she said slowly; and then she tried to recollect it; and suddenly, "Yes, I remember!" she said.

Her face was crimson still, but her eyes were looking full into her father's now, and they were not like the eyes of a woman who felt ashamed. For a moment this struck him, but he was too nervously excited to try to understand it. He was a man whom a small thing threw off his balance; and he always became flurried and confused when he was disturbed. He could not stop now to think what Mildred's look meant: he could only think how angry he was, and with how much cause he was angry.

"You remember! And is that all you have to say?" he exclaimed, staring at her. "Re-

member it!—God bless me, do you think *that* makes it all right? Upon my word, Mildred, I don't understand you! We don't think alike, I know, upon many points,—not upon many points,—but upon a matter like this I did imagine—I never doubted it—I did certainly believe that there would not have been any difference of opinion between us. I don't forget that you are a motherless girl, Mildred—of course I don't forget that—it excuses you for many things,—but yet there are *some* things about which—about which no woman




"I have not done what you think I have," she said. "When I say this, Father, will you not trust me for this one night? I cannot speak now—I want you to let me go away; only will you believe me when I tell you that, whatever you may have to forgive me, you have *not* to forgive me what you are thinking of now. But let me go to-night—oh, pray let me go!" she cried, for she was trembling, and her colour was changing at last from red to pale.

Then for the first time it flashed into his mind what she meant, and, too startled to know what to say to her, he held his tongue and let her go without another word. "Good God, the girl's in love with him!" he had thought to himself.

He sat for half an hour after she was gone pondering over this discovery, and feel-

ing dazed and almost stupefied by it. In love with him! And was he in love with her too? Could this thing have been going on under his very eyes, and he never have known of it?

"The pair of fools!" he cried angrily, and rose from his seat, and began in an agitated way to walk up and down the room. If it was true, he said to himself, Philip Romney's conduct had been scandalous. The whole of it must have been his doing—not Mildred's; Mildred was a mere child: his conduct had been *very* bad,—if the case was really as he supposed it had been unpardonable. "Thank God I have found the business out so soon!" was the only consolation he could think of. For, of course, he said, it could not have been going on long—his suspicions must have been roused before if it had been—it was



not possible that matters could have gone very far between them yet. And now what he must do was to part them at once, and take her home, before more mischief came of it. Before he went to bed he looked at his travelling guide, and found when the next steamer sailed for Marseilles.

“We might get to Paris by Thursday, and then I could have her home—the foolish child!—by the end of the week,” he calculated to himself. “And as for Mr. Romney——!”

He went to bed, muttering against Philip something very like anathemas, and muttering them, perhaps, not without some reason; and yet, though he did this, in point of actual fact, even when he was almost swearing at him, he was scarcely as angry with him as many another man would have been. He was


vexed, and put out, and perplexed more than wholly indignant. He thought that he was indignant, and meant to be indignant, but at the bottom of his heart he was not. For it was a hard matter for Mr. Treherne, indolent as he was, ever to be vehemently angry with anybody, nor could he in this case forget at once how well he had liked Philip. He felt aggrieved by the whole business more than enraged. But still he was quite angry enough when he went to bed to lie awake for hours, and to spend a great part of that time in rehearsing the speeches with which he should confront and confound Mr. Romney when the morning came. During these night watches he was very eloquent in the denunciations that he prepared for him, and very imposing in the attitude towards him which he imagined himself to assume.

And meanwhile, while he lay awake, Mildred, wakeful too, heard him moving and turning on his bed, and almost longed, once or twice, to go to him, and throw her arms about his neck, and tell him all her story. But her courage failed her, for she had never contemplated telling her father of Philip's love for her with her own lips. There had always been so little confidence or intimacy between them, that she shrank from doing this. She had made her escape from him to-night without telling him, because she had felt instinctively that the confession would come best from her lover. He could plead their cause as she could not; he had an influence over her father that she had never had. But yet she lay awake for half the night, and thought (as in another way *he* was thinking) of all that, if she had spoken, she might have said

—eloquent and impassioned words, that broke from her like a river in the darkness—and that, in her father's presence, as she well knew, would have fallen back upon her heart like lead.


She said to herself that she must see Philip, if possible, in the morning before her father met him, and for this purpose she rose early. But Mr. Treherne, too, had risen betimes, and she found him, when she left her room, already waiting for his coffee.

A few minutes afterwards Philip joined them. It was not always his habit to be with them at breakfast, and she had been hoping—since she had been aware that her father had risen—that this morning he would not come. But, all unconscious of what was before him, he came; and Mr. Treherne, as soon as he entered, threw down the news-



paper he was reading, and began to talk to him. Philip merely shook hands with Mildred, almost without speaking to her.

He sat down to take his coffee by her side, but any private communication between them now was impossible. Anxious, and sick at heart, she soon left the table, and took a book to one of the window-seats. She understood by this time that her father did not mean to let her speak to Philip alone; and yet she *must* speak to him. She sat for a long time looking at the open page, but reading not a line of it. Mr. Treherne had brought himself and his newspaper to within a yard or two of where she was, and had placed his chair so as to impede Mr. Romney's near approach to her. Left to himself, Philip would probably have come to her side, as he almost always came; but now he re-



tained his seat at the table, looking over the columns of the *Giornale di Roma*, and every now and then reading out some fragment of news, which was meant for Mildred's ear rather than her father's.

For half an hour or so this went on. Then at last Mr. Romney threw aside his paper, and rose up.

"I suppose some of us are going out?" he said, and looked towards Mildred.

"I daresay I may go out with Mildred myself presently," Mr. Treherne answered, quickly, before she could speak.

As he said this, Philip's eyes flashed round upon him. More than one slight thing had warned him already that all was not right: Mildred's silence now, and Mr. Treherne's reply, made his suspicions become certainty. She had not even looked at him when he spoke,

though she had closed her book now, and given up even the pretence of reading it.

But yet, whatever he guessed, he could do nothing. After a moment or two's silence he only said,

"I may as well leave you, then, for a time, I suppose:" and he would have gone away if Mildred had not suddenly at that instant risen up. She had taken her resolution, and, passing by Mr. Treherne's chair, she went straight to Philip's side.


"No, do not go yet," she said, in a low voice, that would have been unsteady, if her strong will had not controlled it. "I want you to stay and speak to my father. He told me last night that he saw me yesterday leaning my hand upon your shoulder—and I want you to tell him why I did it."

They were looking full each into the other's

face. The blood for a moment had sprung to his. Then into them both there came almost the same expression—not of fear, nor even of doubt, but of perfect love and trust.

“Yes, I will tell him,” he merely said, and for a moment touched her hand with his. Then neither of them spoke again. She went towards the door, and, after an instant’s pause, he followed her there, and opened it for her. His face was flushed and bright then.

Mr. Treherne had put down his newspaper, and Philip met him face to face as he walked back. As they confronted one another, the relative positions which they were actually about to hold seemed to be reversed, so little like an impending judge did Mr. Treherne appear, as he stood (with all that dignity gone that had been his so abundantly in the night, when no eye saw him), nervous, flur-



ried, and, as far as looks could speak for him, doubtful of what he was either to say or do; so much more like a judge than a conscious culprit did Philip Romney seem, as he came boldly forward, with his head erect, and passion, intellect, and fire, all in his proud and noble face.

He began to speak at once, without an instant's hesitation. He had dreaded this interview before it came, but now that it had at length been forced upon him he had too much instinctive courage to do anything but face it bravely.

"You ought not to have learnt from Miss Treherne what it was my own duty to have told you first," he began.

"I have learnt nothing from Miss Treherne," her father interrupted, sharply. "I spoke to her last night, but she did not choose to answer me."

"Did she not tell you that I loved her?"

"She told me *nothing*, I say!"

"Then *I* tell you now that I do. I love her above the world and everything in it—above my own life and my own soul!"

Like a flash of lightning the passionate words sprang out, making so sudden a contrast with his previous measured tone, that Mr. Treherne started almost as though he had been struck. He shifted his position a little, and hurriedly fell a step back. He looked more uneasy and uncertain what to do than ever, as, after a moment's silence, he began to speak again.

"You are telling me what I have been certainly most unprepared to hear," he said. "Until last night the thought of your caring for Mildred never entered my mind. If I had had the most distant idea of such a thing I


should never—most unquestionably I should never have permitted you to be together in the way that you have been. You must be quite aware of this yourself, Mr. Romney—quite aware of it.”

Unconsciously and involuntarily his voice had fallen into a tone far less of indignation than of pathetic remonstrance and complaint, like that of a man whose feeling, above all others in the business, was of the unmerited annoyance it had brought upon himself. But for Mr. Treherne's vexation there was in Philip Romney's breast at this moment very little room for sympathy or compassion. He went on speaking, almost as if he had not heard what the other said.

“I believe I ought to have spoken to you sooner, but if I have been wrong in this respect, the fault is mine alone, not Mildred's.

I have held back from telling you because the thought of any possible obstacle being placed between us has been altogether unendurable to me. I have no hope in the world except to make your daughter my wife. She has given her heart to me. Mr. Treherne," he said, too intensely in earnest to waste himself in useless words, "will *you* do what it is so entirely in your power to do—will *you* give me her hand?"

He spoke rapidly and firmly, his eyes looking steadily at Mr. Treherne, not a tone of his voice or a movement of his face betraying for a moment that there was any scruple of conscience within him, any voice telling him that he had no right to ask Mildred to be his wife. And Mr. Treherne, all unconscious of the strength of his own position, conscious only that, with reason or without it,



he had a strong instinctive feeling against her marrying Philip Romney, stood timid, doubtful, and uncertain, feeling uneasily that this man, with his bold face and his ready words, was more than a match for him.

"Will I give you her hand? How can I tell you if I'll give you her hand?" he said hastily and testily. "Do you suppose I would give it to you, or to anyone, in this off-hand way? Really I hardly know what step to take. I cannot think how all this has come about. If I had had the least notion of it—but—why, Mildred is a mere girl, and you—you——"


"I am fifteen years older than she is," Mr. Romney interrupted; "but a man is hardly too old at four and thirty for a woman to love him, nor is a girl at nineteen too young for a man to love."

"I only spoke of your age as *one* of the

differences between you," Mr. Treherne said, half-petulantly. "There are many others—many others. You must be well aware yourself, Mr. Romney (I should be sorry to say anything to hurt you, but really you must be perfectly aware), that in some respects you are scarcely—I am not speaking of your family, of course, your family is as good, I daresay, as mine—but I am sure you understand me—anyone would understand me—when I say that I could not look upon a match between you and my daughter as—as in any way either an equal or—or a desirable one."

"If you were to give me your daughter, you would give her to a poor man," Philip said boldly. "Don't think for a moment that I want to deceive you as to that. You would give her to a man who has been an idle wanderer from his boyhood. You know

all that about me. But suppose you refuse to give me what I ask? Look how the case stands. If Mildred and I had never met, she might have married some wealthy man in her own country: she might very likely have made what you call a great marriage, for she is so beautiful, and she is also to some extent, I suppose, an heiress; but you have not to look at what might have been once, but at what will be now, according as you part us or let us keep to one another. If you part us, you may take your daughter home, but you will take her to no rich English husband. She will be *my* wife, or she will be the wife of no man living. I do not say this—God knows—with any thought of threatening you. If I am speaking roughly, I ask you to forgive me; but I tell you the truth plainly because I want you to understand it clearly before



you answer me. And so I tell you to your face, that Mildred will not give me up. I know she has no power to marry me against your will. If you choose to separate us, she must, of course, go back with you to England; but she will take there with her, as her one utmost hope in this world, the hope of becoming my wife. This is simple, unvarnished truth for you. I say nothing as to whether or not it might have been better for her if she had never seen me: that evil, if evil it is, cannot be remedied now. In whatever you decide to do, you have to take this fact along with you—that she loves me, almost as dearly and as passionately, I thank God, as I love and worship her!”

Mr. Treherne looked round for the seat that was nearest to him, and sat down. Here was a pretty prospect opening before him, who

had last night so complacently planned how he would nip this foolish embryo love affair in the bud! He sat down and remained silent, tapping his fingers impatiently on the table at his side, resenting the whole of Mr. Romney's speech, and yet hardly knowing how to answer it, and still less how to refute it. His only resource after a time was to take refuge in incredulity.

"It is easy to make assertions—especially assertions that cannot be proved," he said. "If Mildred is attached to you, I suppose she would suffer if I saw it right to prevent her from marrying you; but she would get over that disappointment, I have little doubt, just as other girls do. You can hardly—you can hardly expect that I am to take *your* view of the matter, and suppose that a love affair at nineteen is never to be forgotten throughout

a woman's whole life. And most certainly, Mr. Romney," and at last something like spirit came into Mr. Treherne's voice, and the colour rose into his face—"most certainly I am not going to be bullied or frightened into giving my daughter to you or any man!"

"I do not want to bully you," Philip said. "However rudely I may have spoken—for a man who is pleading for what is more to him than his life cannot wait always to choose soft words—yet you can hardly doubt that one of my dearest objects is that we should remain friends. You never before this have met with any want of regard from me, nor any want of courtesy."

"No, I have not, certainly," Mr. Treherne admitted.

"And you never should want either if you let me become to you what I wish to become."

“Of course I have no objections to you personally,” Mr. Treherne began, after a moment’s pause, and then drew himself up rather hurriedly—“at least for the most part I have no objections. You are a gentleman; you have been to me especially, I can cordially say, a very pleasant companion; you have done everything that was possible, and done it most successfully, to make these three last months agreeable to me—I am quite ready to acknowledge all that—quite ready; but when a man—at least when a man of—of some property—thinks of establishing his only daughter in life, you—you will excuse me for saying it, Mr. Romney, but he seeks for something more in her husband than a pleasant, or even—as you are—than a—a high-bred and accomplished travelling companion. In fact, I would almost say that some of the—peculiar

qualities—most agreeable in a travelling companion are precisely those which a father would be most anxious—at any rate would be very willing—to dispense with in his daughter's husband."

"Such as what, for instance?" Philip coolly asked. And then Mr. Treherne began to clear his throat.

"You can scarcely expect me to enumerate them," he said, irritably, after a moment or two's silence. "There are certain qualities which a man who has led the wandering kind of life that you have done must possess in a large degree——"

"And which a man who desires to have a wife had better be without? Well, I will acknowledge that," Mr. Romney said frankly. "But suppose these qualities have only been developed in such a man because circumstances

have forced him to that wandering life that you object to?—suppose that his own intense desire is to leave off that kind of life—to live for the future under his own roof—to have his own fireside to come to, and to have that fireside blessed by the presence of the one woman who is dearer than the wide world to him—”

Philip left off abruptly, the passionate ring of his voice vibrating for a moment upon the air after he had ceased to speak.

“And suppose that you got all this for a little while, and then got tired of it?” Mr. Treherne said, after a pause, with a sudden spurt of shrewd common sense.

“Why should *I* get tired of it sooner than other men do?” Philip instantly and almost fiercely answered. “Because I have been knocked about the world, does that make me incapable

of loving the woman that I want to marry! If indeed you mean that I might get tired of remaining for ever in the same place, you may be right; but if a man wants fresh air to breathe sometimes, is that to be counted so great a fault in him? Would a husband who cared to see nothing outside the four walls of his own house be the kind of husband especially suited to Mildred, do you think?"

"Mildred is at present far too restless and fond of novelty. I think a husband who would be some check upon her in these respects would be the very best kind of husband for her."

"What—a man who had no sympathy with all that is most characteristic in her? God forbid she should ever be bound to such a one! Mr. Treherne," Philip exclaimed, pas-

sionately, "you had better trust her to me! You had better a thousand times trust her to me! Do you think that she is a girl to be trained and moulded, and made this thing or that, according to the hands she falls into? She will lead her own true life, marry her to whom you will; only let her—for God's sake, if you have any feeling for her—let her live it by the side of one she loves, and who understands her and honours her to the finest fibre of her nature!"

There was a long pause after this. Mr. Treherne sat still, troubled and perplexed, and feeling like a man who had got his feet tied, or who was in a mist out of which he could see no way. If only he were at home again, and had the English Channel rolling between his daughter and Philip Romney! But how, without settling things one way or the other,

was he to get home?—and if Mildred took to talking in the same strain as her lover, what in the world was he to do with her?—and how would even the English Channel help him then? Mr. Treherne was a man who loved peace, and the prospect of all this was very grievous to him.

Philip had gone away to one of the windows, and was standing there with his back to the room. With the last words that he had spoken he had almost lost his self-control: the veins were still standing out upon his forehead, and he looked into the street with eyes that saw nothing that was passing there. The man was in deadly earnest—in such earnest that he could no longer suppress his intense excitement, but his high-strung passion was still making every nerve in him quiver, as, after the silence had lasted for a minute

or more, he turned again suddenly, and came back to where Mr. Treherne was sitting.

"You have the fate of two lives in your hands," he broke out abruptly, the voice sounding harsh in its intense eagerness. "For God's sake be wise—be tender—and act justly by us! If I were a thousand times less worthy of her even than I am, it would be short-sighted prudence to part us. Mr. Treherne, I love the lightest word she ever spoke—the breath upon her lips—more than ten thousand other men could love her altogether. Are you afraid that she will be unhappy with me?—that I shall tire of her? You do more injustice to her even than to me if you can think that;—if you can think she is the kind of woman whom a man who had once loved her could *ever* forget!"

Mr. Treherne coughed and cleared his

throat, and sat looking, now in Philip's face, now on the table before him, now rubbing his hands helplessly together—a picture of indecision and feeble distress.

“I really hardly know what you expect from me,” he said nervously at last. “By your own confession, I think, you allow that you have nothing to support a wife upon. Your own means—of course until to-day they were no concern of mine—but, if I have understood you rightly, your own means are barely sufficient for your personal maintenance?”

“Barely,” Mr. Romney replied with a curious intonation.

“You, of course, have—*something*?”

“My father quarrelled with me when I was a boy (he quarrelled with me, if you wish me to speak plainly, on account of my extra-

vagance at college), and when he died all he left me was five thousand pounds."

"That can hardly produce you more than two hundred and fifty pounds a year?"


"It never produced me even so much."

"And you have never practised any profession?"

"I was never brought up to any profession."

"I wonder, educated as you were, that you could so quietly reconcile yourself to—to spending your life in the way that you have done."

"If I had met Mildred ten years ago, I should have spent it differently. But I had no object before me then,—and a man who, after having been brought up as I was, suddenly finds himself cast adrift by his own family, is scarcely in a frame of mind usu-



ally, I should imagine, to turn himself to hard work."

There was another short silence, and then Mr. Treherne began drily—

"And your scheme is, I suppose——"

But he suddenly paused here, for Mr. Romney's eyes, as they were fixed upon him, had a look in them that made him feel uncomfortable. Philip waited for a moment or two to see if he would go on speaking; when he did not—


"My scheme, I suppose you were going to say," he said, deliberately, "is to live upon your daughter's fortune? Yes, my scheme *is* that. If she marries me, what is hers becomes mine, and I take her fortune as I take herself. What else do you suppose I would do? If I love her, am I to leave her because she happens to be rich? Should I show my love for her any

the better if I were to refuse her money, and thrust all the cruel bitterness upon her of becoming a poor man's wife? I wish to God that I had no need to touch a sixpence that belongs to her; but, as I have the need, my scheme is—exactly as you say—to take what she can bring me.” And Mr. Romney looked full into the other's face as he made this frank avowal of his regard for Mildred's fortune, with as clear and bold a voice as that in which another man would have protested his utter indifference to it.

It almost took away Mr. Treherne's breath. He looked with wide-open eyes at Philip, as Philip looked at him; and when Mr. Romney's speech was finished he let a little silence follow, and then he said abruptly,

“Well, you are at any rate open enough!”

“Should you like me any the better if I were less open?” Philip asked, instantly.



“No, I cannot say that I should,” Mr. Treherne honestly admitted. And, in fact, there was a curious feeling of admiration for the man in his mind at that moment; and Philip—as he perhaps knew—had done himself a better service by speaking in the way he had done, than if he had made a hundred protestations of disinterestedness. For an entirely honest speech seldom fails to carry some weight with it, and this poor worthless Philip Romney, amidst all his faults, had more instincts towards honesty, and a kind of daring truthfulness, than many a better man. So—“No, I cannot say that I should,” Mr. Treherne said; and felt that, at any rate, Philip was dealing very frankly with him. “Though, of course, after what you have said,” he added, “I might be justified in suspecting you of loving my daughter’s money more than you love herself.”

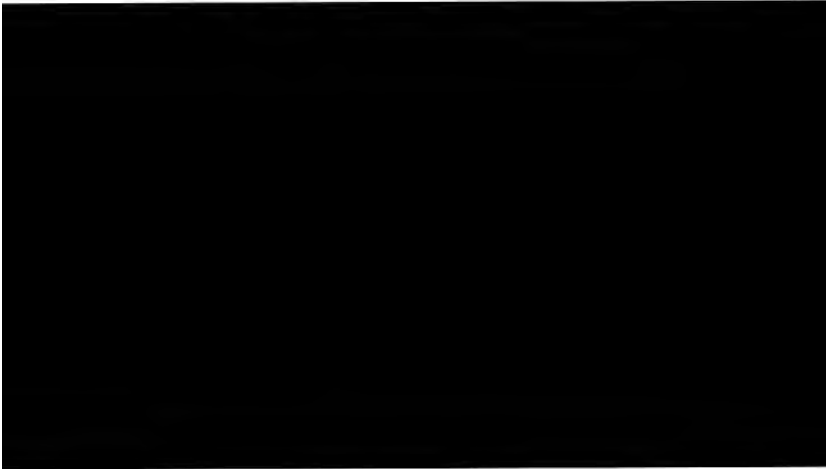
"Only you neither do suspect that, nor will you," Philip answered, in the direct, firm voice that throughout their interview made so curious a contrast with Mr. Treherne's hesitation and want of nerve.

"Well, I allow that I do not. But still, you see, allowing that is only a small part of the matter. The fact is, Mr. Romney, as you must see, that you have placed me in a very—a very difficult position. I don't think that I am a mercenary man. I have never wanted Mildred to make a great marriage, or thought her happiness would depend upon her wealth; but I must say that, in any plan I ever dreamt of for her, I always assumed that her husband—if she married at all—would be a man possessed of at least what might be called a—a fair competency."

"It was a very natural assumption. Only, as

you know, our most natural expectations are sometimes overturned by facts," Philip said quietly. "If she marries me Mildred will not marry a man with a fair competency; but yet Mr. Treherne, if you give her to me, and the fire came into his face again, "I would pledge my life that you will do a thing of which you will never repent! You never will repent of it, if her happiness is the thing that you have most at heart."

Mr. Treherne looked at him, and said slowly—



she had made you so sure of this, she would, to my thinking, have done a good deal better if she had let her father a little into her secret."

"She would have done that long ago if I had let her."

"Long ago? What do you mean by long ago? For how long a time has this love-making been going on?"

"For how long a time have we loved one another, do you mean? Ever since the second day we met."

"God bless me!" said Mr. Treherne. He looked up to the other's face aghast. "But you—you don't mean to tell me surely that you proposed to her then?"

"What—the second day I saw her?" Philip laughed. "No, I did not do that," he said.

"Then—if you are good enough to think I have any right to know" (Mr. Romney's laugh had rather stung him)—"will you oblige me by telling me when you *did* propose to her?"

"I never proposed to her at all. But we have been lovers openly—if you mean that—for the last two months."

"Openly, do you call it? I wish you had been a little more open!"

"I *should* have been more open (in the sense you mean) if I had loved her less. But I have loved her too passionately to run the risk of losing her."

"And yet now, after keeping me in the dark for all this time, you boldly come and ask me for leave to marry her as if you thought I should have nothing better to do than to jump at your proposal!"

"I do the only thing that in the circumstances is possible. I tell you that we love one another, and I expect you to treat us as a man would whose daughter's happiness was dear to him."

"My daughter's happiness may be very dear indeed to me without it following that I should resolve to trust *you* with it."

"If your daughter's happiness is dear to you, this at least will follow—that you will not reject any means of securing it before you have considered and weighed them fully. Mr. Treherne"—Philip had been standing at a little distance, leaning his hand as he talked upon the back of a chair, but now he raised himself suddenly, and came a step or two nearer—"the question all comes to this—will you give your daughter to a poor man who loves her, and whom she loves? If I were

rich I should hardly plead in vain with you; and yet I believe you when you say that you are not mercenary. But you care for the opinion of the world, and for how it will sound to hear it said—as you probably *may* hear it said—that Mildred has married a penniless adventurer. That's where the hitch is. Now, face that possibility, and rate it for the utmost that it is worth. Would you take the brightness out of your daughter's life rather than submit to have to wince a little when a few fools talk? If Mildred can love me, and if you can acknowledge—as I think you can—that you might easily find many a wealthy and respectable son-in-law who would be less to you than I could be—why not *let* the fools talk, and make sure of happiness for her, and of (I think) at least some content for yourself? You think that I press you hard. I see that. But,


as I say to you again, remember that I am pleading for what is more to me than my own life. Mr. Treherne, do not take her from me! We are already of one heart and one soul. If you part us it will be like tearing our very flesh asunder!"

"But really I *cannot* give you an answer all at once—the thing is out of the question! The whole of this business has come in such a startling way upon me"—poor Mr. Treherne began to say in a distressed and bewildered voice.

"Then do not give me an answer until to-morrow, if you like."

"Well, that will be better—certainly that will be much better!"

And, though it was but a very temporary respite, Mr. Treherne grasped at it, and rose up instantly in eager hope of ending the interview.



"I must speak to Mildred again, too. Before I say anything further to you I had better speak to her," he said hurriedly.

"Then let me send her to you," Mr. Romney immediately said.


"What—*now*?"

Mr. Treherne's face of sudden dismay nearly made Philip laugh.

"Why not now? Better have it over at once."

"No, no, I must think over the matter by myself first. I'll find my own time for speaking to her. I beg you will not interfere. And, with respect to yourself,—I think, Mr. Romney—I think it will be best that you should go away now. I can't have you seeing Mildred again, you know—I can't indeed."

"I will merely speak to her for one moment," Philip said, quietly.



"But, Mr. Romney, I object to that. Why should you speak to her at all? It will only confuse things. You had far better not."

"How can you imagine that she is to be left in suspense all day?"

"I will speak to her myself presently."

"You will not speak to her probably for hours to come. No, you must let me go to her, and I promise you I will only stay for five minutes."

"Well, if you *must* do it,"—in a wearied, ag-grieved voice. "Only, remember, Mr. Romney, whatever you do, for heaven's sake"—excitedly—"don't let her imagine for a moment that I have given my consent!"

"I shall only tell her what you have said," Philip replied. ("I wonder what on earth that is!" poor Mr. Treherne thought helplessly.)

"But I shall tell her, too,"—and he spoke slowly,

in his clear, mellifluous voice—"that I think we have good ground for hope."

"God bless me, Mr. Romney, don't do that!"

But Mr. Romney's eyes had lighted up with a sudden brightness.

"Why should I not tell her what I myself believe?" he said. "And why should you think it any wrong done to you to have her told what will make her father so doubly dear to her?"

Mr. Treherne sat feebly folding and unfolding his hands.

"I can't contend with you—really I can't contend with you any longer!" he ejaculated. "Mr. Romney, we had better say no more to-day. I think we had far better say no more."

"I don't want to say any more," Philip re-

plied. "I can leave our cause in your hands." And then he went away.

He went to Mildred, and said, as he took her in his arms—"I have half won you!"

She had been waiting for his return till the long delay had made her faint and sick with fear. It was like the change from darkness to light—from night to morning—when she saw his bold, bright, almost triumphant face.

Half won, he said! How could she keep her heart from leaping up?—as she looked at him how could she help thinking that his victory in the end was certain? Mildred Treherne was proud of her lover in these days with a passionate pride;—she believed in his daring and in his strength with a passionate belief. She knew that he was only half good, only half noble; but yet he was to her so much of a hero that if she could she would have

crowned his brow with bays, and have thought
that the crown was honoured by his wearing
it.

CHAPTER IX.

AND, in truth, Mr. Treherne was almost helpless against such an antagonist as Philip Romney. He did not want Mr. Romney for his son-in-law; all his prejudices were strongly against such a match for his daughter; he felt that he was weak to dream of giving his consent to it; that people would laugh at him and laugh at her; that the whole affair was a folly and an intense vexation; and yet, he asked himself, what in the world could he do but give in? They were both so headstrong that, unless he were to carry Mildred with him away at once to England——

"And do you think that that would make any difference?" she asked him, when in the course of the evening he abruptly propounded this to her as the only remedy that was open to him.

"It would make this difference, I think—which I imagine would be of some importance—that, if I parted you, you couldn't marry him," he replied with considerable dignity.

"Yes, you could prevent me from marrying him, but not from caring for him."

"And you mean that you will persist in caring for him, whether I like it or not?"

"How could I say anything else?" she said, and looked him bravely in the face. "Do you think that I could speak of loving him at all if I could give him up for anything that you—you or all the world!—could say to me?"

Her tone at those words had a touch of Philip's in it—perhaps she had caught it from him—a proud, passionate, resolute ring.

“And what do you imagine—supposing for a single moment that I were to give in to you—what do you imagine your Uncle Heriott would say to all this?” Mr. Treherne asked, after a pause.

Mr. Heriott was his dead wife's brother—a man of some weight in their family.

“What would he have to do with it, Father?” Mildred answered, proudly. “May you not do as you like, without consulting Uncle Heriott?”

“Of course I may do as I like; but I have no fancy to have your uncle thinking me a fool—that's what I mean, Mildred. Your uncle would no more permit a daughter of his—if he had one—to make such a marriage than he would permit her to go out and sweep the

crossings. I am sure I wish he *was* here, that he might be some use to me!" Mr. Treherne said, and sighed in a dejected way.

"I am glad he is *not* here," Mildred answered, half under her breath. "I am glad nobody is here but we three."


And then the girl went up to him, and put her arms about his neck; and instead of being angry with her, he found himself presently, half against his reason and his will, touching and stroking her bright hair.

"It is a most deplorable business," he was thinking; "but I see they will give me no peace till they get their own way." And the prospect of getting no peace for an indefinite time to come made Mr. Treherne shudder.

"I shouldn't wonder that I may be forced to give in—for the time. Luckily there are many slips in a business of this kind; but in

the meantime I really don't see how I can go on fighting against them—they are both of them so extraordinarily self-willed,” he said to himself. And so he met Philip, when he came next morning, with a chill enough welcome, certainly, but yet with a pretty clear foreboding in his own mind of what the result of their interview would be. He felt that he should not be able to hold out against Mr. Romney; and he was right.

“Well, I suppose I shall be driven to give some sort of sanction to all this,” he found himself saying, at the end of half an hour, in a melancholy voice. And then he had to submit to have his hand seized and wrung by Philip in a passion of fervid gratitude that half really touched him, and half made him wince with physical pain. Such a look of triumphant pride and joy was in the man's



face. Mr. Treherne might well have thought, as he saw it, that no words of his had ever kindled such a look on any living face before.

Yet what he had done to deserve it had only been to give a very feeble, hesitating assent to Philip's remaining in the position that he had already taken for himself, of being his daughter's lover. What more he would give besides that he intended to make as little as possible; for, like most weak men, Mr. Treherne had a kind of feeble cunning and dishonesty in him that made him instinctively in any difficulty take refuge in sinuous and underhand ways. He had no exact plan just now in his mind, but he thought that he might temporise with Philip; he did not exactly mean to be false to him, but he thought that presently, when he got home, if it should be considered clearly the best thing to be done, it might be managed

somehow or other to break the marriage off. Here—abroad—he felt so utterly without the means of defence that he saw there was nothing for it but to give in,—to a certain extent; but when he should be once more at home many things might turn up, and ways of escape (if he wanted them) open to him of which he did not think now. In the meantime all he could do was to fence himself round and to be as cautious as possible, he said to himself; so—

“Of course, when I say that I give some kind of sanction to this, you must not suppose me to mean more than I do,” he began to explain. “You must not imagine, for instance, that I mean to contemplate any marriage taking place between you yet.”

“And why should you not contemplate that?” Philip asked quickly.

"Why should I not? Because for one thing I must have Mildred given full time first to know her own mind."

"Do you think, then, that she does not know it now?" Mr. Romney asked almost with a laugh.

"She *thinks*, I daresay, that she knows it,—but what is any opinion she may have worth? She knows nothing of the world,—and you are the first man who has ever made love to her."

"And so you want to show her this world that she does not know, and to let a few other men make love to her? Well, I have little fear of what the result of that would be," Philip said; "and I should have little objection to it, if it did not keep her from me."

"I imagine you will have to submit to it, Mr. Romney, even though it *will* keep her from you."

"Shall I? What length of time do you want for her to pass through her ordeal?"

"You have a curious way of expressing yourself. Ordeal! Who is talking about any ordeal? I am only telling you that I think it would be very unwise to speak of any engagement between you at present. Such a thing ought not to be thought of under—I should say most certainly under a year."

"A year from this time?"

There was such half-smothered passion in Philip's voice that Mr. Treherne felt uneasy, and did not look him in the face.

"Of course from this time. What other time are we talking of?"

"And what do you mean to do with her?"

"Well,—I may take her to London, perhaps. I think it might be a very good thing for her to pass the season there."

"You think it would wean her from me, you mean? She might pass a dozen seasons there, and I should be as secure of her at the end of them as I am now!"

"That may be, but you can hardly expect me to take your simple word for it, Mr. Romney. For my own part, I must say that I shall be much surer of it after I have seen the effect upon her of a year's separation."

"What do you mean by separation?" Philip struck in sharply, in his quick resonant voice. "Do you mean that you are thinking of keeping us *apart*?"

"To be sure I do! Is not that what I have been saying?"

"You said nothing of the sort until this moment. Apart from her for a year!"

"Most people would tell me I had far better keep you apart a good deal longer."

“Mr. Treherne, you cannot do this! You cannot do it without a promise from me that I will keep away from her, and this promise I will not give you! I will haunt whatever place I know her to be in. If you take her to London, I will follow her there!”

“God bless me!” Mr. Treherne cried, and began to pass his hands nervously through his hair. “Really, Mr. Romney, I think, after the concessions I have made——”

“I appreciate the concessions you have made to the full, but yet I will not let you impose conditions upon me which are harder than I can bear. What would be the use of my promising to stay away from her if I did not mean to keep my word? And why should I stay away from her? You mean to let other men see her, and try if they can to win her. Why should she not see me as well as them? You

want her to compare me with them, and to choose between us. How is she to make a comparison if we are to be kept apart?"

"I said nothing about her making any comparison. I think the less she does of that the better. What I want is that she should know something of the world—that she should judge for herself. In fact, Mr. Romney, to speak plainly——" But Mr. Treherne seemed to have some difficulty in speaking plainly.

"To speak plainly, you mean that you want to part us!" Philip said, fiercely.

"No, I don't mean that." (Nevertheless, Mr. Treherne had winced a little.) "I mean merely, as I have told you already, that I look upon a temporary separation between you as—as necessary—absolutely necessary—before I can feel assured that Mildred really knows her own mind."

"You want her to go away where she may escape from my influence?"

"Well, yes; that is what I think it is desirable that she should do. She is in a very heated and excited state at present."


"She is in no more of an excited state than I am."

"I daresay not—I hope not; but I should say *you* were in a very excited state indeed."

"Yet if I proposed to you that *I* should take a year to compose my feelings (as you think she ought to do), even you, I imagine, would think I was a strange kind of lover?"

Mr. Treherne found himself forced into a half laugh.

"The two cases are not the same," he however answered, readily enough. "Mildred is a young inexperienced girl. You certainly at your age *ought* to know your own mind."



"If I am so excited as you suppose me to be, I am no more likely to know it than she is. And if we are both swayed merely by excited feelings, your safest plan is to leave us together till we tire of one another. If you part us, imagination will come to our aid, and will do the very thing for us both that you fear most."

"Mr. Romney, this is, as you must know, very specious and one-sided reasoning."

"How is it one-sided? Has your knowledge of Mildred taught you that she is the kind of girl to give up a thing on which she has set her heart before she has proved it to be worthless?" Mr. Treherne moved uneasily, and made no answer. "You know it has not. Then why do you imagine—how can you for a moment suppose—that she will give up the man she means to marry—that there is the

faintest shadow of a chance that she will give him up—because you part her from him for a few months, or a year? Many a woman in such circumstances, I allow, would do it, but not a woman like Mildred Treherne!”

“If you are so sure of her, then, Mr. Romney, I really hardly see—I do not understand on what ground you protest so vehemently against this short separation.”

“On what ground?” Philip cried, with the fire coming into his eyes. “On the ground that life is too short for us to play with it. We have the present—and what else have we? You tell us to part for a year, and, for anything you know, you may be sentencing us to part for ever. And for what? Simply that you may satisfy your conscience by going through a form which, in our case, is utterly useless and meaningless. Mr. Treherne, you

have yielded a great deal already. I ought to be satisfied with that, you think ; but I cannot be satisfied with it. A man whose daily bread you are taking from him will not be content to be told that he shall have it again a year after this. He wants it *now*, to keep him from starvation. I wish to God you would let me marry her at once, before you go back to England!"—he looked at Mr. Treherne with his eager eyes, and paused a moment, but there was no answer ;—"but if you will not do this, then take her home," he said, "and let me follow you there, and make your twelve months three, and I will be content with it."

He was looking straight into Mr. Treherne's face, with his own full of the bold, strong, resolute expression which, even when his propositions were the most unreasonable, or his case

the most unsound, Philip Romney had a way of wearing, as by a natural instinct. And, indeed, in most contentions between a strong will and a weak one, reason and justice, I suppose, generally go to the wall, and the strong conquers simply because he is strong, and only in a very small degree indeed because he may be in the right. It is something, too, in a discussion, always to *look* like a conqueror—as Philip did.

“Mr. Romney, I think you are one of the most unreasonable men I ever knew.”

This was the only reply Mr. Treherne felt himself inspired to make after two or three moments of uneasy silence.

“I am not more unreasonable than any man is who has set his heart on a great thing. Or, rather, I am not unreasonable at all,” Philip said—“for where is there any want of reason

in asking you to give me *now* what you promise to give me at a year's end?"

"I have not promised to give you *anything* at a year's end,—and, at any rate, I am *not* going to give you Mildred *now*, most certainly, whatever I do. I am not going to have her married anywhere but from her father's house."

"Then take her to her father's house, and let me marry her there. Let me marry her in three months, and I will ask for nothing more."

"I daresay not, when you will have got in that way pretty nearly everything you want!"

"I shall not have got in that way all I want. All I want would include my never being parted from her for a day until she becomes my wife."

"Is that a kind of thing that you ever heard of being done anywhere?"

"I know nothing of the things that are done anywhere; I only know that the thought of losing sight of her makes me half mad."

"I certainly think you *are* half mad."

"Should you like me the better if I were sane enough to tell you that I didn't care whether I was with her or away from her?"

"I think you might care to be with her without being so—so excessively extravagant about it. However, it really is useless, Mr. Romney, to go on any longer with this discussion. All I can say—the very utmost I can say is that—that if circumstances occur to make it advisable in a year's time—though really, even then, upon my word, I don't know how you are to live," Mr. Treherne said in a perplexed way; "for, you see, at the very best Mildred has only what must

be called a moderate—a *most* moderate fortune.”

“I don’t know what she has.”

“She will have what her mother brought me, which was only ten thousand pounds.”

“She has this ten thousand pounds of her own?”

“No—she has nothing of her own. She will have it when she marries,—that is, if she marries with my consent.”

“And if she should marry *without* your consent?”

“Then she can’t touch a penny of it until I die,” Mr. Treherne said sharply.

“That is to say, she is entirely dependent upon you? I understand. Well, she will have this ten thousand pounds of her mother’s; and from you—?”

There was something so coolly business-like

in Philip's quiet question that it irritated Mr. Treherne almost beyond endurance, and yet he scarcely knew how to resent it.

"Really I don't know what she will have from me," he answered shortly. "I had not contemplated giving her anything until my death. If she were to marry you, and the money were actually to be wanted, I suppose a different arrangement might be made. But I couldn't do more than double her mother's fortune: I could barely do that: at any rate, it is the utmost I could do."

"It would be the utmost I should expect you to do. And, Mr. Treherne," Philip said suddenly, with that clear tone of truthfulness in his voice that gave to it at times a peculiar charm, "whatever you may think either of me or of the boldness of what I ask, be sure of this at least—that I understand that you

are acting with a generosity with which few men in your position would. But you are wise to do it, for you will have your reward. I for my part will repay you with a life-long gratitude." And he held out his hand and grasped Mr. Treherne's, when it was half reluctantly given to him, with a fervour which the other scarcely repaid, and that involuntarily made him wince. For in the bottom of his heart Mr. Treherne knew that he was not dealing fairly by Philip Romney: he knew that all he was trying to do was to give him a sop to quiet him, and to secure the restoration to himself for the moment of the peace he loved so well.

And possibly, too, in a manner Philip understood something of this, and knew that the man was only half to be trusted; and yet he was hardly for that the less elated by his suc-

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cess, for it was not in his nature to fear a man like Mr. Treherne. Let him but reach a certain point with him—the point to which he *had* reached now—and he believed that he could trust himself to gain the rest. When he left him after this second day's interview he was wholly fearless—wholly assured of success. The man felt himself so full of strength. Bold, unscrupulous, strong-willed, passionate-natured, moments often came to him when, in spite of all that his wasted life had taught him, in spite of all the lost days that had crumbled away from him, he felt still as if the power of neither earth nor heaven were strong enough to beat him. And this seemed so to him now. When Mildred saw him she read his triumph in his face, and caught—as she often caught—his spirit from him; for in a hundred ways

Mildred and he were curiously like one another, though, in her, qualities which he wanted altogether kept the fearless nature that she had in common with him tempered and restrained.

"Did I not tell you long ago that you would win?" she said to him. "What could he do but give you to me—my royal Philip!"

As he held her in his arms she pressed his head back a little, with a half-tremulous smile, that she might look at the triumphant face. She would have been less than woman if her heart had not thrilled at the thought that all its triumph was for winning *her*. Her noble face!—her brave strong face! She put her lips to his, and kissed him.

"I kiss you first!" she said, and looked into his eyes with a little glad soft laugh.

It was the first kiss, she meant, of their new life,—for the unallowed ones had ceased now.


CHAPTER X.

THEY had intended to remain for another fortnight at Rome, but now, in the altered condition of affairs, Mr. Treherne began to turn restive, and wanted to get home. He was in a perplexed and uneasy state of mind, more than doubtful of the wisdom of what he had even already permitted, and yet finding himself—so far from being able to retract any portion of the half-promise he had given—daily being forced into more and wider concessions, till, in a state of nervous apprehension at last, lest, with his wily tongue, Philip should attack him in his final strong-

hold, and, in spite of his own will, induce him to submit to an immediate marriage before he ever got Mildred again across that English Channel on which he placed so many vague hopes, he precipitately determined to start for Marseilles; and being desperate—as weak men will sometimes become when hard pressed—he did accordingly start within a week of the time when Philip and Mildred had made their confession to him, and, in a kind of momentary flash of triumph, made his way on without any pause to Paris.

Throughout this hurried flight he kept on very fairly good terms with Mr. Romney, though without making any concealment of the terror of him in which he lived.

“You are one of the most dangerous men to have to do with that I ever encountered,” he frankly told him more than once—speaking



perhaps half, but certainly only half in jest. "How you have come round Mildred I have nothing to say to, for love-making is a thing by itself; but how you should come round *me*, to whom you *don't* make love, in the way that you manage to do, is something that I cannot understand! I protest upon my life I shall never feel easy till I am safe at home!"

"I don't see how you are to feel safer at home than anywhere else," was Philip's cool rejoinder.

"I consider that I shall be safe when you are once out of my sight."

"And how long do you expect me to continue out of your sight?"—and Mr. Romney looked him in the face, with a quick, momentary laugh. "You know that feeble security will continue only for a very short time."

"I don't know anything of the kind."

"You know very well that I shall be in England before many weeks are past."


"You will be merely throwing away your time, then, I tell you."

"I am quite ready to throw it away. I have nothing else to do with it."

"But you are utterly mistaken if you think I will allow you to be with Mildred in England as I have been foolish enough to let you be here. You are utterly mistaken, if that is what you expect."

"You need not concern yourself with what I expect. I mean to come and take my chance."

"You had far better not. Why in the world can't you give me a little peace? Haven't I given in to you in nearly every point? I'll let you," said Mr. Treherne, half-desperate, though in point of fact the per-



mission was a very easy one—"I'll let you fix your marriage-day in six months, if you will stay in Paris till I send for you."

"And meantime you will drag Mildred about as a bait for every eligible unmarried man in London to bite at? Forgive me," Philip said, "but I cannot have her subjected to that,—not because I am afraid"—proudly—"but because I will not have her tortured. As I have told you before, if you let other men see her, you must let me see her too. I shall come and watch over my own."

"I tell you what, Romney—you'll badger me some day more than I can stand."

"I don't want to badger you at all. Why should I badger you?"

"I don't know *why* you should,—but you *do* it. And really," said Mr. Treherne, beginning to lose his temper, "when you consider



that I might if I chose carry Mildred home at once, and never let you see her again at all——”


“Do you think that that would ensure you a very easy or pleasant life? For my own part, I shouldn’t like to have the keeping of Mildred anywhere against her will.”

Mr. Treherne found himself forced into a grim smile.

“Yes, that is a cunning point for you to take your stand on. You know very well that you have me there,” he said.

“I have you there, and in a good many other places too,” Philip answered: and went his way laughing.


For they were seldom more than half serious now in the disputes they had together, Mr. Treherne, in spite of his real annoyance, having—at any rate at times—a comic sense of the



perplexities of his position. Had he, indeed, either fully at heart been angry with Mr. Romney for wanting to marry his daughter, or fully entertained the belief that he would do so, he would have been more in earnest in the attempts that he made to separate her from him; but the truth was, that in the first place he was not more than half sincere in the partial consent he had given to their engagement, and secondly, he really liked Philip too well to be altogether vexed at it. Mr. Romney had made himself so necessary to him that there were moments when he thought, with a curious half conscience-struck satisfaction, of the benefits that would accrue to himself individually from having Philip attached to him in the position of his son-in-law. He was a selfish man, in the quiet way in which indolent men generally are selfish, and it weighed

with him as an unquestionable consideration in this matter of his daughter's marriage, that—should it really result in her becoming Mr. Romney's wife—her house would be a very pleasant one to stay at. For Philip, as I have before said, had thought it worth his while to adapt himself to Mr. Treherne, and Mr. Treherne, in consequence, very naturally believed that, in spite of all their differences, they suited one another. He might go elsewhere, and find a son-in-law who would *not* suit him (though desirable in other respects) by any means whatever. So Philip had him here too,—as indeed Philip very well knew.

But yet, for all that, Mr. Treherne was genuinely anxious to shake off Mildred's pertinacious lover for the present, if it were only to give himself breathing time; for there were many hours when he strongly suspected that,



as long as they lived in the glamour of Philip Romney's presence, he, no more than Mildred, could be sure of knowing his own mind. There would probably, he thought, be a disenchanting effect in a return to English air, and for this accordingly he began to long with a nervous longing. He thought sometimes—generally at nights, when he lay awake in bed—that he must be little better than a fool to let Philip Romney continue to hang about his daughter; yet with the return of daylight all courage to attempt to separate them, such as he had seemed to have for a time in the darkness, oozed out at his finger-ends. "The man would not go, though I were to order him to do it fifty times," he would say helplessly to himself. To get away from Philip, since Philip would not be driven away from them, became, therefore, the one im-

mediate desire that possessed him. As for what was to come afterwards, his mind was in an entire mist. He had altogether by this time given up every remotest idea of keeping Philip at bay for the space of a year; he had even resigned all thoughts of six months; he was struggling now for three months, and with only a forlorn hope of winning even these. "For if he *will* come to London, how can I keep him away?" he used to think to himself, with a blank feebleness that was almost pathetic.

And in truth he could not keep Philip away: it would have needed a stronger man than he was to have induced Mr. Romney even for the space of three months to let Mildred out of his sight. When even Mildred herself suggested that he should do this he was fierce and vehement in his refusal.

"If I lose you for three months, I lose you for ever!" he told her. "I may as well give you up now at once, as let you away from me, and set such a gulf as that between us!"

And again—

"Mildred, if you left me for three months," he said, one day, with a strange pathos in his voice, "I should never find you any more!"

"I cannot think why you say that," she answered him. "If *you* left *me* for years instead of months—for three years—for thirty years, if you like—and came back only when I was old—yet, if you wanted it—if I were alive—you should find me!"

"I fear fate and the world, not you," he said.

And she could gain no other answer from him. A morbid fear of delay seemed to be the single fear he had.


"I have you, and I want to hold you fast," he would say to her. "Who can count on to-morrow? The dragon's teeth are always being sown broadcast: who can tell the moment when they may spring up as armed men?"

"I wish you had more faith in the future," she said sadly to him one day. "You always speak like a man who thought the ground under his feet was a quicksand."

"And what is it but a quicksand?" he answered her instantly. "You who read your Bible, Mildred, ought to know something about that. How does it go there—about the powers of the air that are always fighting against us?"

"There are powers of the air fighting for us as well as against us," she said.

"If they are, then they generally get the worst of it, I think! I would as soon trust to my own arm as to one of theirs."



"Yes—but it is there that you are wrong," she replied quickly. "You are always defying fate—always trusting in your own strength and trusting nothing else. You are like a soldier, ready armed, and looking out for some enemy to do battle with,—only like a heathen soldier, not a Christian one, Philip. You are more like Cain with his hand against every man than like St. Paul with his shield of faith."

"I daresay I may be like Cain," he answered coolly, "for I always had a kindly feeling for him. The two black sheep of the Old Testament—Cain and Esau—when I was a child, Mildred, I used to have more sympathy with those two than with the whole of the patriarchs put together."

It was in the last week of February that they left Rome. The greater part of the pre-

ceding month had been cold, but February had set in soft and warm, with a tenderness in the air, and a bright and glad spring touch in it, that made it go doubly to Mildred's heart to be forced to turn her face to the north. "Oh month of March," there is an old Thessalian song that says, "and you too, oh you terrible February! drip as you may, blow as you may, snow as you may, still you have got the smell of spring in you." And the smell of spring—a deceptive spring, as these early ones generally are, but not the less beautiful for that—was over everything when the Trehernes left Rome. The cloudless skies were blue with sunshine, the west winds were blowing, even the melancholy Campagna had got stirred with a temporary life.

"You shall come here again next year, when we are married," Philip said. "We will

spend the whole of next year in Italy, Mildred."

"Shall we?" she answered, and she smiled for a moment; but sometimes it was *he* who talked with eager certainty of the future, and *she* who doubted and feared.

Her heart was yearning with an intense desire to the land that she was leaving; she almost felt as if a portion of the happiness that had been given to her there must be lost and left behind her now. Hitherto the music in her own heart had been only like an echo of the music that had seemed to be everywhere around her; but now that outer music was to become silent—the harmony that had been so complete was to cease. "Do you think you will love me anywhere else as you have loved me here?" she said to him, half in jest, half wistfully, one day.

They arrived in Paris on the first of March, and they rested there for two or three days—the last days they were to spend together.

Before the end of them he said to her—"I will be in London in a month's time."

He announced this, too, to Mr. Treherne,—having worked his way up to it by degrees; and Mr. Treherne of course expressed his opposition, and—equally of course—gained nothing by expressing it.

"I can't prevent you from coming to London if you are determined to come," he said, "but all I say is—as I have said before—that you would show more consideration for Mildred—far more consideration—if you didn't do it."

"It is entirely from consideration for Mildred that I have resolved to do it," Philip gravely replied; and then Mr. Treherne thought it pru-

dent to desist from any further discussion of the matter.

"Write to me!" he said passionately to Mildred, on one of the last days before they parted. "Write to me only half a dozen lines if you like—but write once in every four and twenty hours, or the first time your letter fails I will come and find you."

She promised what he asked. "But if *your* letters fail," she said sadly, "all *I* can do will be to sit still and bear it."

"And you would not do that well," he answered—"my wild-hearted Mildred!"

"No, I should not do it well!" she said quickly, and the eager blood went up into her face.

She thought of how she had answered him long afterwards. We laugh at times in looking on the graves where we have buried our

old selves; at times we scoff at them, at times we weep over them. Mildred Treherne used to look on hers with an intense compassion—a passionate sympathy. “I was so young to have to suffer like *this*—to have to bear *this*,” she used to sob and say. But when she spoke to Philip now the image of this sitting still and patiently waiting that some had to endure, touched her only with a momentary pain. “No, I could not bear it well,” she said, and then shuddered, and put the thought away.

They were to sail from Calais, and as far as to Calais Philip went with them. There was no stoppage made at Amiens now. “I should have liked to see it again,” she said longingly, as they passed through it.

“You *shall* see it again—you shall see it in three months,” Philip answered her—and

made her smile. For the plan on which he had set his heart now was to make her his wife in three months, and to bring her back to the Continent for the remainder of the year. Before they left Paris he had spoken of this scheme before Mr. Treherne, with the singular frankness that he had thought fit of late to adopt in his presence concerning his future proceedings—a frankness that in the circumstances had almost a touch of humour in it; and Mr. Treherne had received the announcement in stoical silence. Silence, he had begun to find, was his best weapon of defence against Mr. Romney's encroachments. "If I once begin to speak, he makes me say what I never meant to say," he would declare pathetically to himself. "With such a man the only way is to say nothing." So for several days before they parted he had adopted

this plan of saying nothing, and in the course of those days Philip had uttered in his hearing some astounding things. "But it is very easy to talk," as Mr. Treherne wisely reflected. "The boldest words cost nothing."

Before they finally took leave of one another, however, it would be well, he thought, to speak a word or two plainly to him; so when they were about to part, he did manage to say, with considerable decision—

"Now, you have been having it of late pretty much your own way, but, before we say good-bye to one another, just let me remind you of what you seem a good deal to have forgotten—that, in point of fact, I have not consented yet to any engagement between you and Mildred."

But Philip gave one of his bold, quick laughs, and asked—

"What is it that you *have* consented to, then? If it isn't an engagement, what is it? She has promised to marry me, and I to marry her. What makes an engagement, if that does not?"

"But she has no power to promise anything: you know that as well I do. She can't give a promise of any kind without my consent."

"Suppose she cannot? You have given your consent."

"You persist in saying so; but I have done nothing of the sort."

"We think differently about that, you see."

"But—God bless me!—what has *thinking* to do with it, if the fact *isn't* so?"

"But I hold that the fact *is* so. Have you not let us be together as lovers for this last fortnight?—are you not aware that we

are going to write to one another as lovers?—do you not know that I am coming to England in a month in the character of her accepted lover?"

"You are not coming, I know, with *my* consent."

"No, *you* only want me to come at the end of *three* months: I allow that. But that has nothing to do with the fact of our engagement."

"Well, it is no use arguing with you: all I want you to understand is that *I* shall not consider it an engagement."

"You must do as you please about that, I suppose."

"And I will not have Mildred thinking of getting married to you yet. If you really are to be married at all, you must take *my* time for it.

"You are very safe in saying that, for you know we can't help taking it."

"Yes, in words you will profess that you take it, and all the time you will be straining every nerve to get your own way."

"I certainly will try to get as much of my own way as I can. What man would not? But come—let us stop disputing. We are going to part good friends."

"I have every wish to be good friends with you—if you don't press me too hard."

"I am not going, at present, to press you at all—nor to think of anything but of all I owe to you."

"I am afraid you are resolved to owe a great deal more to me than I am ever likely to be content that you should."

"When I really owe you all that I wish to

do, I hope to see you as content about it as I am."

Then Mr. Treherne shook his head very doubtingly, and Philip went his way to Mildred.

He went on board the packet with them, and, in spite of the nervous remonstrances of Mr. Treherne, he stayed beside her till the vessel was on the point of sailing.

"It is only for a month—only for one month!" he said to her again and again before they parted; but the tone of his voice, and the expression of his face, and his whole manner to her were so agitated, that they gave the lie to the consolation in his words. He wrote to her afterwards—"It was like meeting death to leave you!"

"I wish you would go," Mr. Treherne had

come to him twice and said nervously (for he was in mortal dread lest the vessel should start with him on board), and twice Philip had made some impatient answer to him ; but when the feebly irritable voice came with its third appeal he turned suddenly round with so savage a face, and ejaculated so fiercely—"Leave me alone, for God's sake!"—that Mr. Treherne fell back precipitately, and disappeared amidst the little crowd around the gangway.

But they were on the point of drawing the gangway up, and the last moment had really come. Indifferent to the press of people round them, Philip held her passionately on his breast and kissed her.

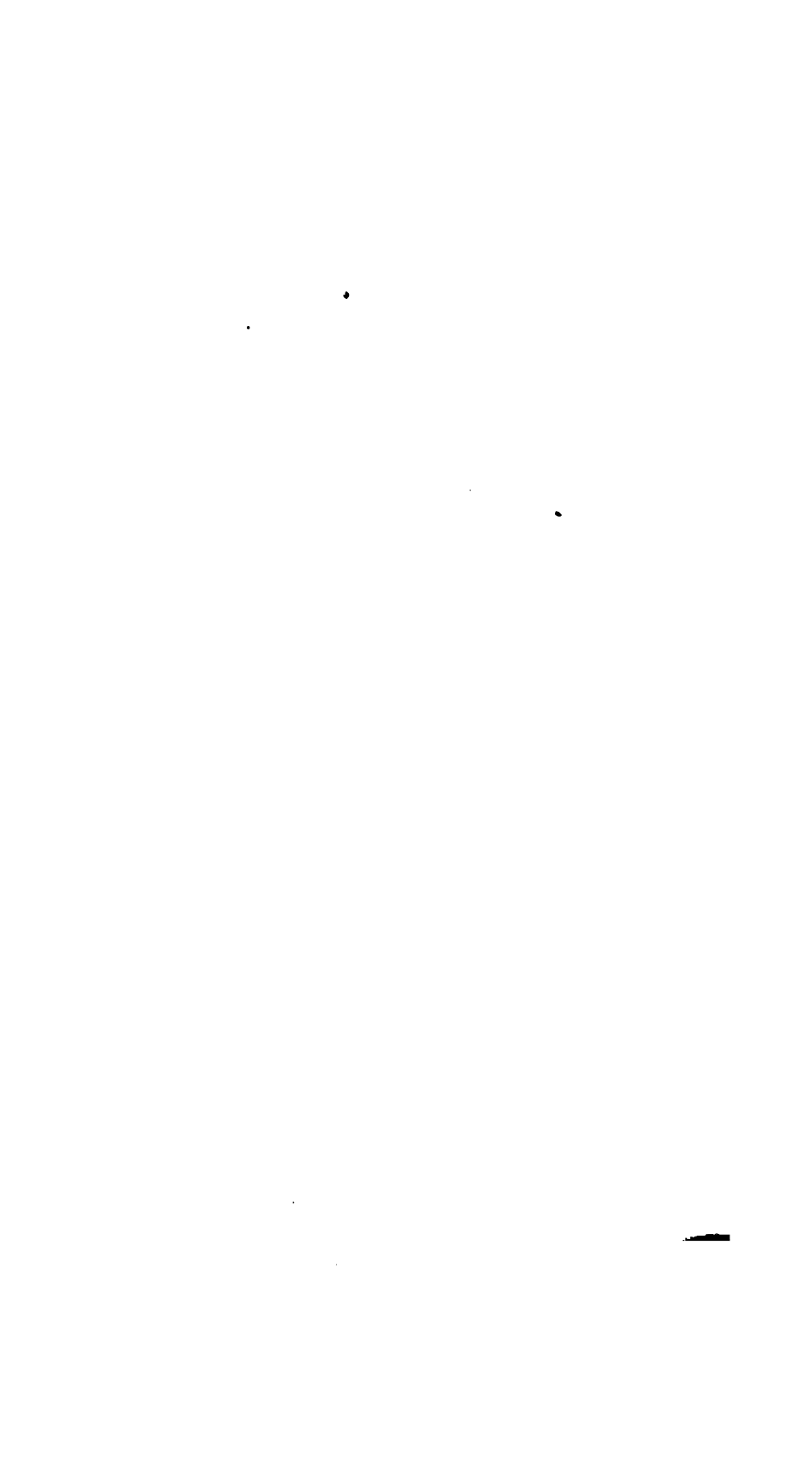
"I leave my heart—my life—my soul with you!" he said.

These were his last words. In two or three

seconds more she was standing alone, looking back at him with eyes that had got wildly blind with tears.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.









the 'information' and 'communication' fields, and the 'information science' field.

The 'information science' field is the most recent of the three fields, and is the only one that has not been previously defined. It is the only field that is still in the process of being defined.

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